

Sunday after Easter 19/4/20 John 20: 19-31 **Lockdown – Touch – Wash & Deep Clean**

At Easter, we celebrate God not remote or distant but out of an amazing love that we can never earn or deserve or fathom, with us, suffering alone so that the ultimate hold of darkness, sin, pain and of death for all who look to Jesus is broken. But more than that, a living, loving God, not dead but still very much alive -and not finished yet.

In these months now, we face major challenges: of containing and combatting a global pandemic; of protecting the livelihoods of many; and for Christians, that of keeping the faith and recognising how and where the Church may share truth of our risen Lord.

Various features and terms in our changed lives speak to me:

**Lockdown:** In the current states of lockdown that restrict our movements and protect our nation and others around the world, I am heartened by the accounts in John 20 of how the risen Jesus appeared to his disciples on 2 Sunday evenings in a row, despite their having locked their doors in their fear of the authorities and He offered them “*Shalom*”, a Hebrew word which means an inner peace of mind, forgiveness and peace with God, as well as with our neighbours, and wholeness - healing of body mind and spirit. As the very heavy boulder that sealed Jesus’ tomb was blasted away, so too the risen living Jesus Christ can break through every obstacles, however seemingly impossible or immovable; and wants the church to serve and witness beyond the walls of our buildings.

**Touch:** I ask people to” **keep in touch**” but *touch* is precisely what we can’t now do. The Lord can. The living Christ comes alongside to touch our lives. And John reports, Jesus with neither facemask nor social distancing breathed God’s life and power into their lives. More powerful than any ventilator or vaccine or drug to give life and fresh start. On another occasion, the risen Christ walked alongside two other discouraged, despairing disciples but they didn’t recognise Him for some time.

**Wash your hands! & Deep Clean:** Over the last month, I have become acutely aware of surfaces I touch routinely in the course of a day. The handles of shopping baskets, door handles, letter boxes, touch pads have become sources of worry. There is danger without – but there is also danger within. Shakespeare understood this when he had Lady Macbeth scrub her hands in a vain attempt to expunge a blot of guilt from her heart. No amount of soap or sanitiser would purge her soul. King David after he had abused his position and his power, longed to be clean too –he prayed to God for help to be purified from the wickedness he knew came from within him “*Cleanse me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow*” (Psalm 51:7)

What a relief that someone can indeed cleanse those hard-to-reach parts of our inner lives. We do not need to be fearful that our hearts are polluted or infected beyond help. In the sight of God, through Jesus, we are acceptable, welcome, made perfect. This spiritual and moral deep clean is available to us all whatever our challenges and struggles. -

I pray that each one of you would also know the Living presence of this resurrecting God with you at this time, the forgiveness He offers and the power of His love for you.