

Thoughts for Easter 5 (John 14:1-14)

Those words of Jesus “Do not let your hearts be troubled” are ones which we need to hear very often in our lives, because there are lots of times when our hearts and our minds are greatly troubled. We all suffer, in varying degrees, from fear: there are many things of which we are afraid. Much of the time these things are quietly tucked away at the back of our minds, and we may even manage to pretend that they do not exist. But every now and again, something comes along to trigger them off, and we are suddenly all too well aware that they do exist.

Perhaps we are afraid of being ill, and of having to go to hospital; perhaps we are afraid of being disliked or rejected by other people, afraid of making a fool of ourselves, or of losing the respect of others; we might be afraid of losing our job, of losing our role in life, afraid of failure, afraid of retirement, afraid of old age, afraid of death. We may even be afraid of ourselves, afraid that we may not measure up to the standards that we set ourselves, afraid to look within ourselves for fear of what we might see. And these are only a few of the fears from which we suffer – some are common to us all in one form or other, but we all have our own individual combination of things of which we are afraid.

Jesus knew this. He knew all about human nature. He met many people who, like us, were afraid. They asked him many anxious questions which betrayed their fears, questions which showed him what they were worried about: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”, “How often must I forgive someone who wrongs me?”, “Which is greatest commandment?”. In some cases he answered such questions directly, whilst in others he did not, but in every case he was able to see through the question to the underlying fear which inspired it.

And his concern was not just with answering the question, but with putting aside that fear and anxiety. He was concerned with releasing people from the bondage of fear, and bringing them into the freedom of knowing the love of God. Over and over again God has said to his people in one way or another “Do not be afraid” – but we still need to hear those words for ourselves, and to take them to heart. Of course, this does not mean that all our fears have disappeared and troubles are a thing of the past, but they no longer have such power over us, and they are put in their proper perspective within the security and freedom of the love of God.