

The Thirteenth Station:

Jesus confronts Peter



'Feed my sheep'

Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in him shall never die. Alleluia.

A reading from the Gospel according to John

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' A second time he said to him, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' He said to him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep. Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when

you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.' (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, 'Follow me.'

John 21.15-19

Reflection

As we read the resurrection accounts, as we have travelled with these stations, I am struck by the 'touch and go' moments of those who met the risen Christ.

Mary in the garden; the friends on the road to Emmaus; Thomas. The experience of the risen Christ is 'touch and go' to those he encounters. He is there one moment then suddenly gone.

In all kinds of ways, in every conceivable context, people have known for a fleeting moment with physical certainty that God is with them. And this encounter for Peter with the Risen Lord is no exception and in each of his response he is told to 'go' and 'care' materially and physically.

The material root of Christian faith is not an accident. The God who becomes flesh, suffers and dies, calls his followers to physical involvement in the world.

When we are touched by the love of God, however that might be, we are told to go and make that love visible and real to others. Visible in how we act, how we serve, and how we challenge the world in the name of Christ.

I have no doubt that those first disciples, taking their strange tales of a risen Christ into a doubtful world, often felt that things were 'touch and go'. Yet despite the danger the excitement of the Good News they carried span out in every direction. It could not be contained.

'Touch and go'. Faith is often on the cusp of fear and love. We long to hold onto the moment of certainty – but Jesus says 'don't cling'; 'don't stay here'; 'don't hide behind locked doors'.

Like Mary, Thomas, the two friends at Emmaus and Peter we will never forget that touch. Neither are we asked to. The God who has touched us with his presence says 'go'. 'Go', and turn that moment into a lifetime of faith making real to others the love I have shown you.

Prayer

We praise you and we bless you, our risen Lord Jesus, King of glory, for even in the glorious victory of the resurrection you understood the failure of Peter who denied you. As you restored him to relationship with you, remember all who feel downcast and worthless in this world's eyes and give them a sense of purpose and value. To you, Lord Jesus, loving us despite our denial, be honour and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus: Dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life: Lord Jesus, come in glory.

Music

Ye that know the Lord is gracious,
ye for whom a Corner-stone
stands, of God elect and precious,
laid that ye may build thereon,
see that on that sure foundation
ye a living temple raise,
towers that may tell forth salvation,
walls that may re-echo praise.

Living stones, by God appointed
each to his allotted place,
kings and priests, by God anointed,
shall ye not declare his grace?
Ye, a royal generation,
tell the tidings of your birth,
tidings of a new creation
to an old and weary earth.

Tell the praise of him who called you
out of darkness into light,
broke the fetters that enthralled you,
gave you freedom, peace and sight:
tell the tale of sins forgiven,
strength renewed and hope restored,
till the earth, in tune with heaven,
praise and magnify the Lord.

Words C A Alington (1872–1955) • *Tune* Rustington, Hubert Parry (1848–1918)