

## *Keep moving*

St Philip's Anglican Church, O'Connor

Easter Day, Year A — Sunday 9 April 2023

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*Acts 10:34-43, Colossians 3:1-4, Matthew 28:1-10*

In 1986 Halley's Comet appeared in the night sky. Susan and I were renting in Hawthorn in Melbourne's inner east. A gang of people came round, and we got ready to go out to a spot where we were told the comet could be seen. I recall calling to Susan to get ready. 'I'm not coming,' she said, 'I want to watch the TV'. I replied: ':But Halley's Comet only comes around every 75 years or so'. 'That might be so,' she said, 'but Dallas is only on once a week!' That is my first enduring memory of Dallas.

The second memory concerns Bobby Ewing JR's younger brother. The actor who played Bobby obviously wanted out of the show, so he was written out—he had an accident and died. A year later, he wanted back in, so the script writers claimed that his death had been a dream and his on-screen wife woke up there he was! Little wonder I preferred to go out in the cold to watch Halley's Comet.

The resurrection is not Jesus come back to life, back to normal, business as usual. Jesus does not return because he needs to continue on with the drama of his earthly life; he is not written back into the script! His death was not a dream, Peter and Judas and Mary and the others don't wake up and find that it was a just a nightmare. The betrayal and arrest, the trial, the mockery and abuse, the execution they were all real. There can be no 'business as usual', nothing will ever be the same again.

The disciples when they encountered the Risen were clearly amazed, frightened, astonished. This was an event for which there was no precedent. In Matthew's gospel and in John's, Mary Magdalene wants to hold on to Jesus. The events of Jesus' betrayal and execution were so traumatic that she clings to him. John describes the scene more fully: 'don't cling to me,' he says, 'because I have not yet ascended to the Father.'

To some degree ,many of us, most of us perhaps, from time to time, yearn for days past. It is, I think, part of being human. We convince ourselves that life was better then, simpler. But the Easter message is one that challenges us: what is it that we are clinging to? Jesus is clear: don't cling on to me but go and gather the others and tell them I am going before them, gather up the others and tell them to join you on a journey.

When I look around and read the papers or look at my news feed, all too often, in lots of different ways, I see folk clinging! There is a sense sometimes that folk long to be in the right; you might have heard the expression 'to be on the right side of history.' We see it in the church and in politics and other places. But this striving for rightness can stand in the way of our following, because once we reach a point when we think we are 'right' . . . we stop. And the message of Jesus is 'follow me'; it's all about the willingness to keep moving.

You see the Jesus of the gospels doesn't reassure us of our rightness; look at Peter's speech in today's reading from the Book of Acts. In Peter is someone who was a close confidant of Jesus in his lifetime; but someone who regularly got it wrong! Look at the end of the passage we read; Peter knows the assurance of forgiveness.

So this resurrection life that we are called to live is one in which we are on the move. We might think that it would easier to live in the past, but it's not an option. Even in the Church, although we look back to the earthly life of Jesus, our call is to live his life now in the Spirit,

to move into the future with confidence. We might be concerned about the dilemmas that we face in our ever-changing world; the disciples faced them too. But in journeying we will discover the dilemmas of others and find in them, quite often, a search for the truth. Truth . . . what is truth? The question through the millennia.

The truth is that, in the resurrection, what has been revealed is the very heart of God and in that heart you will find forgiveness. Forgiveness is the key to resurrection life, renewed life, life in its fullest. Striving to be right simply alienates us from others, closes our minds and hearts, and prevents us from journeying on. We become clingy! When we read the words of Jesus in the gospels, we need to read them in the light of the resurrection: 'I am the way the truth and the life,' he once said. And at another time, 'The truth will set you free.' What a wonderful way of life! Who would want to cling to the past when this is the future?

A happy and blessed Easter to you all. Amen