

23 March 2008

Christ Church – Easter Sunday

“Why do you look for the living among the dead?” Luke 24:5

The question the angels asked the woman who came to the tomb that first resurrection Sunday is a good one; “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” (Luke 24:5)

The first thing that strikes me is how simple but profound that question is. Who would think to finding life among the dead? It almost seems to obvious; you find life with the living.

Today as you watch TV, see advertising bill-boards, read the News paper or listen to the radio your being conditioned to find life among the dead. You’ll see enticing photos of exotic places to visit. You’ll admire and want the latest and the greatest product available. You’ll hear of an event that you just have to see, it’ll enrich your life. It’ll be the greatest thing you’ve ever seen, experienced, lived.

But none of them are alive! You’re clothes are not alive, yet how passionate are we as a society about fashion and image. Your car isn’t alive, yet it lures us to invest ourselves in it. A holiday destination isn’t even alive; it’s an event that disappears as soon as it happens. How many dead things am I tempted to believe will give me life?

I live in a society obsessed with trying to find life among the dead. It’s called a consumer society where I’m told I can buy my way to life through the accumulation of dead things. But as soon as I get it I start to loose it!

If I look for the living among the dead what do you reckon would be the result? An accumulation of dead things would lead to what?

“Why do I look for the living among the dead?” What deception entices me to do such a dumb thing? When you put the question that way it seems so obvious that the place to find life is among the living. Tim - Give up pursuing the dead.

I only know of one person who isn’t dying or dead, and that’s the risen one, and we know him on a first name basis; Jesus. Jesus is ALIVE. Alive and inviting you and I to share his life. What a fantastic gift – sharing live with the living one.

Jesus calls each of us to follow him – to walk with the living one – we call that discipleship. We don’t mimic the dead but as we live with the only eternal, living one our lives take on his character of life.

Today we’re reminded what a wise investment we make as we follow Jesus. This isn’t an investment that we’ll eventually loose but one that will totally claim us, bringing us into a life that is beyond our wildest dreams.

Our wildest dreams once realised, disappear. Jesus’ wildest dreams once realised don’t disappear but grow, because he is alive. What an amazing life Jesus has in store for those who look to him. I get excited thinking about the life Jesus invites us to live with him.

That life of course has started, as we now daily walk with Jesus. Looking for life through him – so we see relationships as the goal of life, not things.

You don’t forgive your car when it breaks down, you forgive other people and restore and heal that relationship. In Jesus we give up treating people like machines, or investments and relate to them as living people, who Jesus loves with his life, and empowers us to love with our lives, using the possessions at our disposal.

I give up expecting perfection, because that’s trying to find the living among the dead. Perfection is an ideal, not a living thing. And when I apply that to myself I kill myself. I kill my sense of self because I never measure up, or I become painfully arrogant placing myself above others. Striving to be perfect, what a killer, because I’m seeking the living among the dead.

Expecting people to never make a mistake, what a killer of relationships. They hurt me, they deserve what’s coming to them. I wasn’t fair, they should have known better. When you seek life among the dead all you’ll end up with are more and more dead. Dead, hurting relationships.

Jesus doesn't seek perfection, he seeks to love you, to free you so that you can love others from the depth of love you now have in him. Jesus is alive so he can love you, today. Perfectionism can't, it's a dead idea. That's why Jesus forgives, heals, restores people, because that's what a loving living person does.

What dead things are trying to seduce you? Jesus is alive.

Jesus is alive today, tomorrow and forever. Where's the best place to look for life? Thank God we all know the answer is Jesus the living one.

Jesus the living one shows us how to live by the example of his life. He lived doing his Father's will, not his own will. When I live from my own wants and desires, I'm trying to find life among the dead! Isn't that a subtle trap? When I seek to find life in Jesus wants and desires I find life, for he is alive, the living one.

When I look at the cross it reminds me that Jesus' wants and desires definitely lead me in a different way than my own wants and desires would have taken me. I need to keep my focus there so I don't get sucked into trying to find life in what is dead.

So let today be a simple reminder, that we are people who find life with the living one – Jesus.

Let us pray.

Jesus, show us where we are being tempted to find life among what is dead. Open our hearts and minds to your leading that we might hear and see you, following closely, living your wants and desires as we share your life with you. Thank you for coming so that we might find life in you, the living one. Help us lead other people to you. Amen.