



## **7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter 2021 | Sermon – Revd Canon Stan Evans**

*May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.*  
(Psalm 19: verse 14)

Within our lifetime, each of us can expect to be bereaved in some way. No one reaches old age without having passed through the shock, sadness and even the physical pain of grief. It is part of the human story that we will lose those who are special to us and have to learn to rebuild life without them.

Although some cultures give guidelines as to the length of the mourning period, in reality grief is inexact and cannot be contained by a given number of days. What happens as we grieve is that we learn to adjust to a new way of living without that particular person physically present. At times that process of readjustment is intense, sometimes it is very practical, sometimes it doesn't seem to affect our day-to-day existence much at all. Then, just as we think we have come to the end of our grieving, a word is spoken, a song comes on the radio, we smell a particular scent, and our memory jolts us back. It's then that we realise that we still have some adjusting to do. We never really get over losing the people we love – we simply get more efficient at making those internal adjustments as time goes on, reshaping our lives even as we are mindful of all that they continue to mean to us. This last week I conducted a funeral with half the congregation in the Crematorium chapel and the other members joining us on Zoom from the UK.



It was a strange situation – but hopefully, even the sight of the coffin and the flowers and the voices of those from whom they were separated helped to bring closure allowing all to try and come to terms with their loss.....just as the disciples strove to come to terms with what they had experienced. A strange and difficult place to be.

Jesus leaves his disciples not once but twice. The first time is the crucifixion. Although he has forewarned them that the end is coming, they scatter in fear, unbelief and grief. After the resurrection, as we have recalled in the last weeks, Jesus spends time with his disciples once more, teaching and encouraging them, only to leave them for a second time at the Ascension. On this occasion, they are baffled, but not afraid and not bereft. He has told them to wait for God’s promised Holy Spirit and they know that they have his work to do. In John’s Gospel Jesus prays to God the Father for his friends’ protection as they will be “in the world”.

In the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, Jesus makes clear what that means, as he speaks directly to the disciples and gives them a mission. They are to continue his ministry and share his wide vision for the whole world – from Jerusalem, through Judaea and Samaria and away to the ends of the earth. It is important to note that Jesus does not give detailed instructions of how they are to do this.

There is no one-size-fits-all method for sharing God’s love – as the rest of the accounts in the Acts of the Apostles bear witness.



We learn three things from Jesus from today's readings:  
that he loves his followers and prays to the Father for us;  
that he longs for the whole world to know the love of God;  
and that he calls on his followers to carry on that vision.

Like those first followers we are making sense of what it means to be living in the new reality of the resurrection.

Like them, we have work to do, sharing the love of God to the ends of the earth and in our own location.

Not all Christians have clear-cut conversion experiences, so many cannot distinguish the time before they followed Jesus from the present. Still, however, we embrace the language of living a new way, and must regularly ask what it means to adjust to a new situation, to live a new life.

This is where the seasons of the Church come into their own.

We are used, in Lent, to being asked to think inwardly and examine ourselves before God: to think about all that keeps us from fully loving God and our neighbour.

But what about when Lent is over – when Jesus has once more been crucified on Good Friday and risen again on Easter morning? What about this season of Ascension and Pentecost? Perhaps now we can seek guidance from God about how we live the resurrection life outwardly in the everyday.

How do we, quietly, deliberately, live out joy, hope, love and peace in new and fresh ways? What is like to be alive with God in our life? Where is God's Holy Spirit giving energy today?



Transformed by this resurrection life, we live outwardly for Christ, shining with love for his world.

This week I was asked what was the definition of Mission for our Chaplaincy? Why are we here and what are we doing all this for?

Since my appointment and particularly since the beginning of the pandemic we have been forced to look at being a *Mission shaped Church*. We developed a clear strategy on how we could reach those beyond our walls, whilst also serving those residents who remained on Lanzarote. Part of that strategy was to also look at those in desperate need in our local community.

***'With signs of faith and words of hope he touched the untouchables with love and washed the guilty clean.'***

These words from Prayer D Common Worship, which you will hear again in a few moments, have been at the very heart of what we have strived to do here on Lanzarote. So many who have found the love of Christ in their lives are finding a new meaning of Church. For we have been and will continue to be the 'Church without walls'.

We do not question 'how' to do church - we have found the answer and we are reaching those who are suddenly realising what it is to have the love of Jesus in their lives.

It is exciting and it is successful - and as others watch it and share on the journey, they ask the question *'What is it that makes them tick?'*

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The answer is that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life .....and that is worth celebrating.

Celebrating.... Celebrating the life of a loved one who died in faith might help us to lower the walls of grief that built up around us and slowly let His light take away the shadows of “bereavement” – if we let in the light and love of God even in our darkest times.

AMEN.