

**6 April 2008  
Second Sunday after Easter**

**Nic Denny-Dimitriou  
Church of the Ascension, Hilton, KZN**

Focussing this morning on two of our readings:

**Isaiah 51: 1-6**

It speaks of God's power of restoration. God who made and developed all things, is busy restoring that which has been broken or damaged. These are some of the words and themes that stand out in the passage:

- God's comfort and compassion
- God's law and righteousness – the standards
- The power to be “a light to the nations” – bringing God's light to those who do not have it or know it
- God's power to offer salvation, of an eternal nature, so that even when “the earth wears out” what God has offered with remain and never fade.

**Gospel passage, Luke 24 – on the road to Emmaus**

The appearance of Christ, Risen – one of several accounts

Very powerful

Jesus recognised in “the breaking of the bread”

~~~~~

At the heart of the Christian faith is the Person of Jesus Christ: his birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension. In Jesus, God came to us in Person.

In Holy Week, especially in our services on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, we focussed on what we call “The Passion” – those events in Jesus' life that strongly demonstrate and express the extent of God's love for us

At Easter our focus becomes the Resurrection – appropriately focussing on the Power of God

The Resurrection was one of those “Aha!” moments (“paradigm shifts” to use a popular current term) – one of those events, after which everything is different, everything is seen and understood differently, and which gives a new focus, changes the shape of our reality, changes the landscape mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

It speaks to us of the Power of God in overcoming human sin, offering the promise of transformation, of dealing with death (physical and spiritual)

The same God who brought into existence everything that is, has overcome our failures and frailties that come about because of our rebellion called sin.

At one level the Resurrection is mind-blowing; it is not an everyday occurrence and that this should have happened to God (in Jesus)...

Yet at another level it is not mind-blowing; this is God who created all things, and can make all things happen!

Last week we saw something of Jesus' response to one who struggled to believe second-hand accounts of the Resurrection (Thomas); he believed indeed when presented with Jesus in person! Jesus responded in a very loving and gentle way with Thomas' difficulty in believing – our powerful God can deal gently with us!

“Power” is on everyone's lips and minds:

There is the lack of a certain kind of power (electrical power)

There is the high cost of another kind (petrol and oil, which power our vehicles and machinery)

Load shedding (comments on the nuisance / frustration / job losses / dangers)  
We joke about “Eskom as the Prince of Darkness” and talk about “previously-lit areas, not blackouts” – to make light of the experience and because humour gets us through difficult experiences. But power is a serious issue, and the lack of it, for we use it for heating and cooling, lighting and entertainment, transport and communication, cooking certain foods otherwise unsafe or inedible, and to make / create / transform items into usable products – our whole economy is based upon forms of power being used. So we are familiar with power – its necessity and what happens when we lack it!

So what is the Power at work here, in the Resurrection of Jesus?

It is God's Power, the power of life, and over death, and over sin.

It is Power that validates Jesus' claims as to who he is and what he says he can do, vis-à-vis God's gift of salvation (as also promised in the OT passage from Isaiah, read today)

It is the Power of God at work in us

Power to transform us – we are no longer “slaves to sin”

Power to assist and carry us through our “besetting sins” caused by our human frailties, selfishness, ego, and our ability to damage others... and ourselves

Also the Power of self-control, of God producing transformation within us by God's Grace, of “change of heart”

It is the Power of Connection to God

To fill the void or emptiness that is there without God (St Augustine's famous comment about the God-shaped space in each of us)

The power of “coming home”, spiritually

My father's story from 25 years ago ...(tell the story) ... a sense of finally being re-connected to the originator of his soul

Related to that...

The Power of Belonging

Not only belonging to God, but someone / something / a cause greater than ourselves – a powerful human need. Life is not focussed purely on Me!

That is an Inspirational Power

Of life writ large

Of all the possibilities and potential to develop what God has given us

The Power of God's Spirit at work in us

[In 5 weeks' time our focus will be on the Gift of the Spirit, at Pentecost]

Power to develop within us "the fruit of the Spirit"

(cf. today's Reading from Acts 2 – Peter's preaching)

There is also the Power of God's Word

To understand the Scriptures, and allow their truths to be at work in our lives and in society

That is the Power of Story:

God's Story intersecting with ours

Stories of God's dealings with people in history

... Which becomes real in our lives as we listen to others' stories and understand God, and how God can be at work also now, in our circumstances

Power to understand the bigger picture and purpose of life – for the Future

This life properly understood as an introduction to a fuller one

Understand the future, gives shape to the priorities and focus of our lives now, how we live and how we (prepare to) die

Come to Jesus:

The one with Power of Life, as Creator

Power over sin, that we are "slaves to sin no more"

Connection to God's bigger picture

The inspirational power to live

Love and Grace

The words of St Paul: I pray that you may have power to grasp how big and wide and long and deep is the love of God for us

In our gathering now, these different elements of the Power of God are all expressed and made known – in prayer, confession made and forgiveness received, God's Word listened to, of communing with God in the sacrament of Bread and Wine, of expressing our faith or being carried by the faith of others when in crisis / pain / doubt.

Come to the Power of God, expressed in Jesus.