

Dear Friends,

John 20: 19

Jesus is dead. His friends had been certain of that. He had been executed. His corpse had been put in a tomb which was sealed with a heavy stone. Surely that was it. He was finished. With his death all of their hopes and dreams had also died. The meaning, life and joy they had found with him was over and gone. Except that, one of them, Mary Magdalene was telling everyone that she had seen him, that he was alive. What were they supposed to make of that?

They are in a house. All the doors of the house are locked. They are hiding. They are staying inside. They are afraid. We can relate to that. We've had an experience that's been something like that over the last little while. They are in Lockdown. They are in Lockdown because the powerful people who had Jesus arrested, tortured and executed could be coming for them next.

They are however experiencing another kind of Lockdown, what you might call an inner Lockdown. They, the men in particular have been through a time of crisis. In this crisis they have got to see what they are really like. The mirror has been held up in front of them and they have not liked what they have seen. Jesus had given them a beautiful commandment. He called them to love. He showed them what this would look like when he washed their feet. That act of service was to be a pattern for them to copy. He told them that he had ordained them to bear fruit, maybe most of all the fruit of love. It all seemed like such a good idea when he said it. It made them feel as though they could go out into the world, generously give themselves and make the world a bit better, just like Jesus made the world better.

But within minutes, they had all failed in the simplest of ways. Jesus had been in anguish and they had not been able to stay with him while he went through it. He had been arrested and they had all immediately deserted him and run away. Peter who had said, "I will never deny you. I'm ready to die with you". He had denied knowing Jesus, had denied being anything to do with him. With the death of Jesus, they had lost everything, including the sense that they were worthy people. They remembered that Jesus had said, "Those who are ashamed of me, of them I will be ashamed". Well, they had been ashamed of him. If these crazy stories that he was alive were true, then he wouldn't be wanting them anymore. He'd be looking for new and better friends.

Their hurt was deep. They felt wounded and broken. And they were keeping it to themselves. They were hiding it. They were in an inner Lockdown. They felt so vulnerable and they weren't going to show that to anyone else. They had locked all their inner doors. They were afraid.

Maybe they thought to themselves. "Even if Jesus wants to get to me, he won't be able to. Not while I'm like this. I am too locked down. My inner doors are too securely sealed. Even he could not get to me while I'm like this". And maybe you sometimes are tempted to think something similar. "Jesus won't be able to get to me. There's this, that or the other in me, in my life or in my background that will surely keep him out. They will make too big a barrier, even for Jesus".

And if they thought that, they were mistaken. And if you think it, you are just so wrong.

God bless you,

Tony