

**Acts 2: 14a, 22 - 32**  
**John 20: 19 - 31**

**Easter 2**  
**1 May 2011**

**Very Revd Peter Beck**  
**Dean of Christchurch**

**Cathedral worship at Christ's College Chapel**



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Nasruddin earned his living selling eggs. Someone came to his shop and said ‘Guess what I have in my hand.’

‘Give me a clue,’ said Nasruddin.

‘I will give you several: It has the shape of an egg, the size of an egg, tastes like an egg. Inside it is yellow and white. It is a liquid before it is cooked, becomes thick when heated. It was moreover, laid by a hen...’

‘Aha, I know!’ said Nasruddin. ‘It is some sort of cake.’

This little story was given by a holy priest of India called Anthony de Mello. His writing has a knack of taking us right to the nub of our human predilection to miss the obvious, to ignore what is in front of our noses, to get seduced and focussed on the surface of things rather than the deep tides and rhythm of really living, living out of our hearts.

The group that was to become the Church gathered in the upper room. And what a credulous group they were.

These disciples are the ones that have been closest to Jesus. They are his friends and confidantes. They have eaten with him, they have slept alongside him, and they have seen and heard all that he was on about. My God, are they deaf, are they blind? And they’ve had Mary Magdalene, Joanna, the mother of James, and other women who had gone to the tomb with spices to anoint his body only to be confronted by angels [in glorious outfits we’re told by Luke], who had challenged them by saying ‘What are you doing here? Don’t you get it? Haven’t you understood a thing that he was saying to you? Why are you looking for the living amongst the dead? He is risen. God help us, when will you get the message?!’

The women have rushed back to the eleven, all locked away in this upper room licking their wounds. And their response – ‘an idle tale’ they

thought it, and they did not believe them. Well what do you expect from men? When do they ever take women seriously! Peter goes along to see, and he's amazed, Luke tells us. Sounds like bewildered, bemused and doesn't know what to think. The penny hasn't dropped yet.

The pair arrive footsod and weary from racing back from Emmaus. 'Our hearts have been burning within us' they have said to themselves. Now the confused and unbelieving bunch are all together and they are trying to work out what is going on.

Next. There is Jesus. Breaking through the locked doors of their bewilderment. Now this is simply too much. You're dead. You should be lying in the tomb, all quiet and peaceful. And you come along, disturbing our expectations, to find us when we should, to all intents and purposes, be fleeing the city, large as life, bold as can be and saying 'Peace be with you'. Not only that, he commissions and sends them to begin the great mission of the Church. John tells us that they rejoice, but the following week, where are they again? Shut away in the room, this time with Thomas. Again Jesus breaks through the locked doors of their unbelief and fear. Thomas faced with the physical reality of the risen Christ finally catches on - 'My Lord and my God'! Nothing can be the same for him again. And you and me too?

Just how much evidence do we need to believe that Christ is risen? How much to believe that life is stronger than death. Because that's the heart of it isn't it. Do I really want to believe that life is stronger than death, with all the implications that means for how I live my life?

Remember the story of blind Bartimaeus. Jesus says to him 'What do you want?' Bartimaeus gets straight to the point, no beating around the burning bush for him. 'Sir', he says, 'I want to see' - 'I want life. No more pretence, no more game playing, no more giving into death within and without me - I choose life and the things of life!'

Since September and now February we have seen the actions of God as we have been remembering and restoring the memory of community. It is the community of grace which we the church stand for and seek to live out. And again today is our opportunity and our challenge to immerse ourselves in the life of the world around us, keeping firmly rooted in a life of prayer, keeping our eyes on Jesus who, as Paul tells us, is running this race with us, our companion and inspiration and friend along the way.

This has been a traumatic time, and there will continue to be much grief as we mourn the loss of friends, of so much that made up the physical environment of our city, and lost of all the loss of homes and jobs and the sheer hardness of living through this winter. And it is time of great hope for the future. New life is being born out of the ruins of our city and of our lives. A society will be judged by the way in which it treats the most vulnerable in its midst. So will we be judged. And we the church must be at the heart of it all, celebrating and pointing to the presence of the risen Christ in the midst,

There are many unknowns ahead of us here in this city and church. But we can be quite assured that whatever life may deal out to us, the victory is won, and we will constantly be looking for the new life in Christ which is constantly emerging and wanting our contribution. . There are many dangers and traps ahead. The journey is perilous, and it will be easy to become frightened, feel bereft, and be immobilised. But in this Christian faith is an energy and a purpose which is no more nor less than the life-giving love of God, and nothing, nothing can separate us from that love, nor daunt us in our task of 'proclaiming the good news to the whole creation'.