**Bible study resources**

**Sunday 23 April**

**Acts 2: 14a -, 36-41**

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.’Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what should we do?’Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven;and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.’And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

**Matthew 28: 8-15a**

**8**So they (the women) left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples. **9**Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. **10**Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers and sisters to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

**The Report of the Guard**

**11**While they were going, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests everything that had happened.**12**After the priests had assembled with the elders, they devised a plan to give a large sum of money to the soldiers, **13**telling them, “You must say, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ **14**If this comes to the governor’s ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” **15**So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story is still told among the Judeans to this day.

1. We can look at the chief priests and elders and despise their bribery and corruption. But what if bribery and corruption wasn’t their intent?

What if their intent was to hold on to the story as they believed it should unfold simply because their imagination hadn’t grown with the possibilities that Jesus made possible?

What are your thoughts?

1. What are the stories we tell among ourselves to try and keep things the way we want them to be? Stories about how we do church, stories about who does what, stories about what happened when.

When we do this, are we short-changing ourselves of resurrection possibilities?

1. Response 1:

The women left the tomb quickly with wonderment, awe and great joy, running to tell the other disciples.  Jesus meets the women and greets them. They come to him and worship him. Then Jesus echoes the words the angel had just spoken to the women … “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers and sisters to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

Go to Galilee. To familiar territory. Home base. It’s like Jesus saying to us – I’ll meet you in Robina

Response 2:

The chief priests conspire to provide an alternate explanation for what has happened – that Jesus’ disciples took his body away. They pay the guards to keep the whole thing as quiet as possible.

Keep in mind that these guards were responsible for making sure the tomb was kept secure. Matthew had gone to great lengths to tell us that the guards were present when the angel appeared at the empty tomb.

How do we see these responses played out today?

1. The empty tomb raised questions that demanded authenticity.

What might these questions be?

1. As we try to whole-heartedly live into resurrection life, and help other people find their place in the kingdom of God, are there stories we need to stop telling to allow for the new things God is doing? Are we holding on to ways of doing and seeing things that no longer fit with the kingdom of God in our world today?

Or are we open to the possibilities that resurrection makes possible in our lives?

1. Bp Tom Wright says: there’s no point defending and explaining God’s new world if you’re still living in the old one yourself.

How can we grow courage to tell the resurrection story with the same awe, wonder and joy as the women who encountered Jesus at the empty tomb, so others might know the life of God in their own lives, today?

That’s how the church was born. How will we help the church grow in our time?

Collect for 3rd Sunday of Easter

O God,
your Son made himself known to his disciples
in the breaking of bread:
open the eyes of our faith,
that we may see him in his redeeming work;
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen