

Reflection by David Kennedy for Easter Week 2024

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon. ² And a man lame from birth was being carried in. People would lay him daily at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the temple. ³ When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked them for alms. ⁴ Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." ⁵ And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶ Peter said, "I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk." ⁷ And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. ⁸ Jumping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. ⁹ All the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰ and they recognized him as the one who used to sit and ask for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, and they were filled with wonder and astonishment at what had happened to him. Acts of the Apostles chapter 3. 1-10

The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead is wonderful enough. But it is even more wonderful to reflect on the fact that Jesus Easter victory means that his ministry continues down through the years, over 2,000 of them, since the first Easter.

This Bible reading from Acts 3 illustrates this truth. In Easter there is a sequence beautifully set out in the central window of the East Window at St Andrew's. If you stand before the High Altar and look up at the central window, from the foot of the window you see the crucifixion. Either side of Jesus is first the sun shining in noonday strength, but opposite the sun is entirely eclipsed. The blue glass suggests the darkness that covered the whole land on Good Friday. Look up a little more and you see a mother pelican piercing her own breast to feed her chicks with her own blood – an ancient and venerable picture of the meaning of the cross, that we might have life. Look up further and we see the risen Christ in shining splendour with hands outstretched, perhaps showing us the wounds of his passion and carrying the flag of victory. Look up further and we see his glorious ascension; here his right hand is raised, blessing his disciples as he leaves them. Above his are the flames of Pentecost, like rays of the Sun coming down from God upon the Church as the Holy Spirit is given. Finally, at the top, Christ sits enthroned in glory as Lord of all.

Easter – Ascension- Pentecost belong together as the Spirit of the risen Lord is poured out on his disciples. Here they are given power and authority to continue Jesus' work. And so, in Acts 3 Peter and John go to worship at the Temple. They see a man who has been lame from birth, who is begging for alms. 'Any change?' - he

cries to them as they pass. Peter stops, looks at him intently and then says, 'Look at us'. The man thinks he is in luck. But Peter then does something far beyond giving him his loose change. 'Silver and gold have I none; but what I have I give to you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk'. And we are told that Peter grabbed his right hand and pulled him up. And the man was healed instantly; in fact, Luke tells us he 'jumped up'; and then went 'walking and leaping and praising God'. This is not the type of healing that, like your Vicar, required a brace and crutches and physiotherapy, and learning again how to walk properly after muscle waste. This is complete and utter restoration; from life-long paralysis to gymnastics – instantly.

If you read on in Acts, this healing led Peter and John into trouble. But their testimony was clear. They had no power of themselves to help this man. It was the power of the name of Jesus, the one who had been crucified but now is risen, that performed this work.

The joy of Easter is that the ministry of Jesus continues by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Church. It's important to remember that. While today, things may not be quite as spectacular as in Acts, Jesus remains the fount of all ministry. He is *the* teacher, preacher, pastor, priest, healer, servant and evangelist. All we do in the Church is in *his* name, for *his* sake, by *his* enabling. The test of our Church and of all its activities is whether they reflect his love and compassion, his values, his passions. The Church is not a merely human society, it is the living Body of Christ.

St Augustine famously said that in the Eucharist, we receive the Body of Christ in order that we might be the Body of Christ in the world.

May St Andrew's be a Church of Christian people who daily and weekly offer to the Lord our time, our gifts, our prayers, our service, that through us, Jesus may continue his gracious work of spreading salvation all around. May we rejoice in the power of the name of Jesus. The east window of our Church tells us everything we need to know.