

Sermon for the Third Sunday after Easter 2020.

Isaiah 25:1 & 6-9. Colossians 3:1-11. Psalm 66: 1-5 & 7. John 14:1-11.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen.

The Collect: Living Father, who has given thine only Son to be the Way the Truth, and the Life: grant that in him we may faithfully seek thee, joyfully find thee, and for ever possess thee, God blessed for ever. Amen.

Every day we listen to the recent death toll, explanations of the graphs, the number of tests, and the repetition of the message ‘stay home, protect the NHS, save lives’. The presentations have a ring of truth and candour about them. But, we are all sensible enough to know that we don’t get the whole truth, nor real candour (open, honest and frank). We get something called ‘spin’. That’s an interesting word: look it up! But, it can be used to mean turning something to get a favourable impression of it. That’s the nature not only of politics, but also of most human self-presentation. We spin ourselves to present the best side to others, to ourselves, and to God. That’s a dizzying thought!

Isaiah (25:7) says: ‘And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over the peoples, the veil that is spread over the nations.’ Colossians (3:9) says: ‘Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature’. Both authors know that it has been part of human nature since Adam to ‘dissemble and cloke’, i.e. to use ‘spin’. That’s what we do. Why? Because we want to look good to man, and to God. Some aren’t concerned to look good to God as they don’t believe in Him. In that case, they try to pull the wool over as many eyes as possible, hoping that the underlying truth of personal falsity will not be discovered. One way to distract others from the truth is to divert their gaze towards another object. Politicians are not the only ones to practice this, but they are at least trained to do it well. If it were not so tragic, it would be a good game.

But, is Jesus playing a game of spin with His disciples just before His trial and death? Jesus says (John 14:6) ‘I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.’ We have heard that verse several times, and we have probably come across various permutations of it. Is it about the way, or the truth or the life together (the true, living way) or about each subject individually? Is it about Jesus’ trajectory, or His attribute, or His example? Is it about His expectation of us: namely, that we should walk His way, be truthful, and live this out? Is Jesus

reassuring the disciples that, though their hearts are troubled, they shouldn't be, because He is going ahead of them to paradise, and they will be provided for when they get there? Or is He saying (using the phrase 'and you know the way I am going') that they should be prepared for His imminent departure to the Father? That magnificent verse (14:6) encapsulates so many facets that we can't get a firm grasp on it. It is spinning too fast!

The Collect for today leaves us some clues as to what we should do to catch the truth. We should, with God's gracious permission, faithfully seek him, joyfully find him, and for ever possess him. St Paul tells the Colossians how to do this by putting to death all that is earthly in them; things that are focussed on self-gratification. We do these because our nature (the old nature) is still clinging to us. Why do we cling so tenaciously – because we have our minds on things of the earth, and we haven't died to self? So, we are spinning the ball to keep up momentum, and we can see everything whirling around the truth, but not Truth itself. It needs courage to stop doing what we do by nature. Rather, it needs faith, and with that faith, grace is supplied.

Let us seek Him, not ourself.

Let us joyfully find Him, not miserably substitute our own miserable substitutes.

Let us for ever possess Him, when we are at one with Him, and Christ is all in all.

Christ is risen. Alleluia.