

APCM Sermon 2008 Easter 5 Year A John 14.1-14

Jesus said, "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact will do even greater works than these, because I am going to the Father."

As a Christian I've had times of finding those words unsettling, even a bit undermining. I believe in Jesus Christ, I trust in him for my salvation, I seek to follow him as Lord and Saviour; but I can't say that I come anywhere near doing the works that he did, let alone doing 'even greater works than these. Does that make me a complete failure as a Christian?

Well, thankfully, I now see that that's not quite what these words mean. In fact they are both untrue and true at the same time! On my own, they are untrue. I can't do all the healing, teaching, saving work of Jesus. But as part of the worldwide church things are different. As part of that 'great multitude which no one can number', as part of that great community of saints living and departed then that saying of Jesus becomes a glorious truth. In Jesus, all the goodness of God was focussed in a human being once and for all. In him people found the very source of life and love. Some embraced that and found forgiveness and eternal life. Some could not

cope with it and hounded Jesus to death on a cross. In his life Jesus healed the sick in body, mind and spirit. Through his life and teachings he brought God to people and people to God like never before. But in the flesh he was but one man. One human being in one three year period in a few square miles of a far away country. It was only after his resurrection that the risen Jesus could truly live in and through others. In union with Christ and in the power of the Spirit his followers took his word, his forgiveness and healing to every corner of this earth, until now infinitely more people have been brought to God through Jesus in his church than could ever have been in his lifetime.

“Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do and in fact will do even greater works than these..”

You can't be a Christian all on your own, only together can we be anything like what Jesus calls us to be.

At Holy Trinity we've agreed that our task as a church is to, “Be Bridge builders – bringing people to God and God to people in the power of the spirit and in union with Christ.”

We try to make sure that this is the central thread running through all that we do as a church, whether we are reading or cleaning, making coffee or sharing in bible study, singing in the choir or preparing for a big service. Is this helping to bring people to God, or helping to make God's love real

to some person, in whatever tiny way? What about at home? At work? At school? In the town? If we truly offer whatever we do to God, then he will work through you and in you. As Jesus said, 'I will do whatever you ask in my name.'

And we do all we do in a spirit of humility, holiness and hospitality. Humility – with our feet on the ground and knowing our weakness. Holiness – with our head in the clouds and knowing God's greatness. Hospitality – with hands open wide to give and to receive.

We can only do this together. And on this day of our Annual Parochial Church Meeting I thank God for all of you, for the journey of faith we travel together. I thank God for all you do as individuals, for the faith, fun and friendship you share with me and with one another.

We're going to be joined later in the summer by a new member of our clergy team. David Banbury is an experienced priest, about my age, with a wife also called Kathryn and two teenage children, Ruth and Philip. David lives in Leamington and has been doing a national job as a Consultant in Church Growth, helping churches of all types to grow in quality and quantity. He's also been a TA Chaplain and returned last year from a 7 month tour of duty at a field hospital in Iraq, and last week he ran the London Marathon in under 4 hours, so he brings many different interests and talents to us. He and his family will be joining us on the Parish Weekend

away in June so many of you will meet them then. This is a new and senior post in our team. He's not replacing anyone, but will work with all of us to help take us on from where we are now. His job title is Director of Mission and Faith Development and his job description has been on the website for some time now. I'm sure he will seek to help this church to grow in quality and quantity. We need to hold him and his family in our prayers, and also ask in prayer whether we really want this church to grow.

As we give thanks at our Annual Meeting for all that has been good, we also look forward to all that is to come bringing ourselves and others to God, in the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ.

Amen.