Home Group notes for the week following 8th April 2018

EASTER SEASON – Encountering the Risen Christ

AS WE GATHER

News that Jesus was alive began to spread among His followers, and wherever people were confronted with the reality of His resurrection, their lives were transformed

READING SCRIPTURE	John 20:19-31 [optional readings Acts 4:32-35 (33)	Psalm 133
	1 John 1:1-2.2 (1.9 + 2.2)]	

THINKING TOGETHER

John records that Jesus appeared to His disciples when their faith was at low ebb as they gathered together fearfully and miserably. After giving the customary Jewish greeting, Jesus gave His disciples the opportunity to see and accept that it was really He who came to them (John 20:19-20)

John tells us they were overjoyed – how would you have reacted / behaved if you had been with them? Discuss

Jesus went on to identify Himself with the Father from whom He received the authority to do His work; and then delegated this work to His disciples, breathing His life-giving Spirit into them (John 20:21-22) [optional readings Genesis 2:7 and Ezekiel 37:9]

Why, do you think, Jesus did this? Discuss

This is a commission / task given to every Christ-follower (the Church) today. It is the responsibility of the Church to spread the gospel of salvation in the world.

However, believers must never forget that as God's messengers they need the power and authority of Jesus as much as He needs their voices, hand and feet in order to fulfil this task [optional readings Ephesians 1:22-23 and 1 Corinthians 12:12].

It is only when believers perfectly love and obey Christ that they are fit to be His messengers and instruments

Do Christians always spread the true message of Christ, acting within the will of God? Discuss

How can we tell whether the Holy Spirit is present and functioning in the Church? Discuss

Having reawakened His disciples' spiritual faith, Jesus made quite sure that they understood their mission. He gave them (and He gives every believer today) the privilege of conveying the message of God's forgiveness, and He entrusted / entrusts to all disciples the power to proclaim / warn that forgiveness rests on true penitence and acceptance of Him as Saviour and Lord (John 20:23)

How are you enabled / able to announce the message of forgiveness of sins? Discuss

How do you use this privilege? Discuss

Thomas was not with the disciples when Jesus appeared to them. Like so many of us he had gone off to be alone with his grief (John 20:24). When the others told how he had missed seeing Jesus he could not / would not believe them (John 20:25). He wanted Jesus' physical presence. He needed to doubt / question before he could believe.

Have you ever wished you could actually see Jesus and touch Him? Discuss

When – like Thomas – we withdraw from Christian fellowship we miss a great deal, as things happen to us within the fellowship which will not happen to us when / if we are alone.

Can you share with the group an occasion / time you would have been overwhelmed / unable to cope without the support of other believers?

Thomas teaches us that there is more faith in the person who fights through doubt in order to be sure / to reach conviction that Jesus Christ is Lord, than in the person who thoughtlessly makes a glib profession of belief (John 20:26-29).

A person who has attained conviction, has a certainty that nothing can undermine

Have you ever had doubts about your faith? Discuss

IN CLOSING

As an eyewitness to Jesus' ministry, John's teaching about Him was / is true and can be trusted. His aim was to show what Jesus was like and the kind of things He always did, in order that his readers could accept Jesus as Saviour, Master and Lord – and experience new Life (John 20:30-31)

How can believers learn to understand the life and mission of Jesus?

PRAYER

God of mission, you raised Jesus Christ as the first born of the dead. By your Holy Spirit empower us to witness to Him, so that those who have not yet seen may come to believe in Him who was and is to come, and who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen