

Can we see Christ's life as a commentary on our own? A recent commentator on the seismic shift which Covid 19 has had on our society highlights the inadequacy of the present capitalist way of doing things and the realisation that the huge kindnesses and willingness to serve others which this pandemic has occasioned, calls for another story to be told.

Mutual Aid..can be the basis for the future, if we can recognise the value of these urges and actions, recognise that things can and must change profoundly, and if we can tell other stories about who we are, what we want and what is possible.

(Rebecca Solnit Guardian 14/5/20)

But it strikes me that this other story has already *been* told: it's the story of Christ, culminating today in the statement in Ephesians that

He has put all things under his feet, and made him, as the ruler of everything, the head of the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills the whole creation.
(Eph. 1:23)

Our problem has been, as G. K Chesterton so famously put it, not that this message or story has failed but that it hasn't yet really been tried. The disciples in today's gospel passage are at the beginning of this trial, of this attempt to make the Christian story known to the whole world, so that it too may share their joy, their meaning, their discovery of the possibility of 'mutual aid' forever, funded as it were from 'on high'. And it's a trial in several senses, for already we see their own struggle to put it into practice; some hesitate even now, and it's notable that the Ascension is accompanied by joy but the Resurrection itself was accompanied by fear. So we are in the presence of a story that is still in process, with all the battles within the Church, within ourselves, still in process too. Jesus' commentary on this forever tension between promise and fulfilment is to accompany us in it fully too; to know joy and fear, doubt and certainty, and to say to us, *Come follow me* and *Know that I will be with you always*. The move from Resurrection to Ascension has been one of training his disciples in this sensitivity so that they can now acclaim his departure with joy, knowing that he is, indeed, risen, but that that does not mean his absence from them or the absence of meaning in their lives. Pentecost will affirm them in this belief, in this knowledge that this is the only story to truly make sense of our lives. It's just too good a story to keep to ourselves – but we tell it with our lives, which is where, of course, the problem begins.

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