

Second Sunday of Easter 28 April 2019. Canongate Kirk. Family Service  
Address. Katherine Taylor

### **Jesus Trusts Us**

Our hymn questions      “How can I keep from singing?”

“How can I keep from singing?”

Words which, by the look on their faces, the musicians in our hall on Thursday night could have sung too. For we held a celebration of music and song, welcoming a choir from the Edinburgh Gilbert and Sullivan society. There were about equal numbers of choir and congregation, facing each other, smiling, or perhaps rather broadly grinning. We shared songs - the congregation did join in a little - food and conversation. We mingled together, talked and laughed, forming briefly for that evening a new community, in the hope that we may meet again. We were blessed by prayer.

“How can I keep from singing?”

BUT these words are not only for humans as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds reminds us this week. For birds sing too, although for birds our words should perhaps be changed to:-

“How can I keep on singing?”

For the RSPB’s message is of a massive decline in our bird population with the loss of 40 million wild birds in the last fifty years.

They are missing from our skies, our woods, our fields and our gardens.

If birds aren’t there it becomes harder and harder to recognise their voices, harder to recognise their songs, harder to recognise who they are.

In our Gospel reading this morning, the disciple Thomas found it hard to recognise Jesus from other peoples’ voices for, when the other disciples, afraid and locked in their room, saw Jesus come and stand with them, saying to them “Peace be with you,” Thomas was missing.

So he missed seeing Jesus. He missed seeing the most important person in the world to him. He must have been devastated.

He is called “Doubting” Thomas but I think that he is honest in his refusal to believe that Jesus is alive unless he sees and touches Jesus himself. He is honest in his questioning but the conditions he imposes on his own willingness to believe mean that he trusts himself rather than God. His voice and his song are silenced.

Of course, we recognise Thomas now too. Sometimes in ourselves, when our voices are weak or silent. We miss the voices which we may have hoped to hear singing beside us in praise. The voices of children, family, friends and neighbours are missing from our churches.

There are louder voices which drown out the voices of faith. They are strident in their confidence of being right. Yet faith is not a matter of being right or a matter of proof. Faith is a matter of relationship. A matter of love. A matter of trust.

In love, the risen Jesus comes into the disciples’ fear and grief in that locked room. He comes into their lack of purpose, saying “Peace be with you.” He changes the ordinary greeting still used in that part of the world today into something extraordinary. “Peace be with you” lasts beyond a day into eternity.

The Jesus who is alive, knew that Thomas was missing. He knew why he was missing and He came and stood beside him.

Thomas’ heart was filled. He found his voice, singing “My Lord and my God!”

These words are for us too, this Sunday after Easter Day. For when we trust Jesus, Jesus trusts us to recognise His voice, in our strength, in our weakness, in our weeping, in our joy.

He trusts us to let our hearts soften, to turn round to meet Him, to look at Him standing there beside us, alive, gazing at us with eyes full of love. He trusts us to say, “My Lord and my God!”

When we say that, in the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus trusts us to be His witnesses, to sing, whatever form our singing takes.

This week, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has launched a project, Let Nature Sing, with a recording of 25 different bird calls, in the hope that it will be downloaded by as many people as possible, together with a series of concerts of 800 years of music inspired by birdsong.

The RSPB tells us to “Spread the word - don’t let nature’s music stop. We need to turn up the volume on nature before it’s too late.”

Spreading the word and turning up the volume is for us too.

It is for us too crucially at this time when the voices of Christians and those of other faiths are being silenced by brutal violence and persecution.

In our faith that Jesus is the Son of God and is alive with us now through the presence of the Holy Spirit,

In all the joy and love of this faith

How can we keep from singing?