

JESUS' PROMISES AND OURS
JOHN 20:19-29

The bank promises me £50 when I present my bank-note; you promise to tidy your bedroom when mum comes to inspect it; we promise to be good in December as we get ready for Christmas; I promise to buy tickets to go to cinema at some point! There are promises and lots of them. They are part of life for us; when we say "I will..." we make a promise and then sometimes we keep them and sometimes we don't and when we don't and we let someone down, next time we make the promise we try even harder to get it right. The promise to tidy your bedroom is one promise; the promise to keep it tidy is another and perhaps harder promise.

Today is called Promise Sunday in Juniper Green Church because we have people making promises about their faith and the part they will play in the life of the Church. There are promises to follow Jesus; promises to live life in Jesus' ways; promises about Church, to be here in worship, to pray and read the bible, to give to church energy, time, gifts, and money, to show loyalty to Jesus by way we live. Others are making promises about being leaders in the life of the Church, promising to work for the building up of the Church and growing Jesus' kingdom, promising to work hard to make sure the Church is united and at peace; promising to be involved in the mission of God in our communities. There are all sorts of promises and as we go through the service this morning, you'll be introduced to these people and welcome them into the Church and into leadership. There is a promise that we will all make at the end, the promise to love and serve Christ and the Church. There are lots of promises and we pray and hope to keep these promises.

I want to start though with Jesus' promises. His friends were frightened. It was Easter Sunday and they were back indoors. The doors were locked because they were frightened; they didn't want anyone to get in. They were wondering what to do next? At least one, Thomas, was out, perhaps walking around trying to understand Easter and the resurrection! Then Jesus appeared in the room and the glory of Easter breaks into the room and into their lives. Jesus gives them a mission: "*As the...*" (*John 20:21*) They will carry on the work that Jesus has begun, with a mission to tell the world about Him and what He has done and that great challenge is still our mission today; it is not yet finished. It is a great challenge, but we are able for the challenge because of the promises Jesus gives.

First, He promises us peace, Shalom: "*Peace...*" (*John 20:21a*) Shalom is a wonderful word, so much bigger than 'peace', which might mean no stress! It stands for "life at its best in the grace of God", life with God's blessing at its heart. The promise Jesus makes to give us "Shalom", to bless us with unsearchable riches of grace and love, to give us life at its best, is the blessing that inspires us, that keeps us going, that gives us everything that we need.

Then Jesus promises to be with us: "*I am with you always to very end of age*" (*Matthew 28:20*) is one way of describing that promise; "*receive the Holy Spirit*" (*John 20:22*) is another way. Jesus Himself is the leader of His people; we follow Him; He promises to be with us always and everywhere to help us. We can't see Jesus, but the Spirit is Jesus present with us, the life-breath of the exalted Jesus. Jesus with us is to help us, give us strength, pray for us, and give us the power to keep our promises.

Jesus keeps these promises; there is never any question about that. Whatever He promises to us, He will do. He promises Shalom, and so He will bless us with everything we need; He promises to be with us, so He will be there even if we

sometimes struggle to recognize that. Jesus keeps His promises to us because that's the kind of Saviour He is. As He keeps His promises to us, He looks for us to keep our promises to Him. All these promises that we will take today, He looks for us to keep them; sometimes we find that easy, sometimes we will struggle; He understands that, but the challenge is always there to keep these promises. Pray for one another, encourage one another, support one another.

Thomas was not in the room; he asked all kinds of questions when he came back and everyone calls him "doubting Thomas". His faith was in two minds. But the first profession of faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord, comes from Thomas: "*My Lord and my God.*" (*John 20:28*) Millions have followed Thomas since; Mhairi-Ann, Rachel and Chris will do that for the first time in public today; it is a chance for all of us to renew that profession of faith. "My Lord and my God". How good does that sound!