**Sunday Gospel thoughts from Bp Helen-Ann**

**Sunday 14th April 2024 (3rd Sunday of Easter) Luke 24.36b-48**

A (bishop) friend of mine recently reminded his diocese that it’s important we remember that Jesus was resurrected, not resuscitated. This is echoed in Nick King’s comments on this passage: ‘Jesus is different. He can suddenly appear in their midst; and they are clearly not sure that it is he. Second, he is real: he can be felt; he still bears (presumably) the marks of crucifixion; and he can eat’. So resurrection leaves Jesus both different and real. In the second part of this reading, Luke reminds us of many themes that have been present in his Gospel, which is nearly at an end: fulfilment, open minds, the suffering and rising again of the Messiah, the message of repentance and forgiveness, and the importance of proclamation. Finally, a reminder that the disciples (and we too) are ‘witnesses of these things’.

Which of these final themes resonates most clearly with you? Which do you find the most challenging?

If you had to explain the resurrection to someone, what would you say?

**Sunday 21st April 2024 (4th Sunday of Easter) John 10.11-18**

Here Jesus tells his followers that he is an ideal shepherd, not a fake one: he knows his flock, and they know and recognise him, and secondly, Jesus ‘lays down his life’ for them. The point about the adjective ‘good’ is that it is not just a moral idea but is relational. It’s the ‘good’ that will not fail us, the good that is faithfulness. Faith is about relationship and not proposition. We as sheep, follow the shepherd in love and not because we are coerced. There is a terrific little book by a Swedish shepherd called Axel Linden Diary of a Swedish Shepherd (2018, Quercus). On 5 March the entry reads: ‘I’ve been thinking about the life I share with the sheep. In one sense it doesn’t amount to much. We stare at one another for a few minutes each day. But looking after creatures is about more than relating to individuals. They are in my care, a state of affairs that is only partially apparent in the mutual sharing…we look at one another, the sheep and me, and it feels like staring into a deep well of experience: problems and possibilities, sources of sorrow and happiness – life in all its dimensions and its inconceivably vast expanse across time and space’.

How does this image of Jesus as the good shepherd speak to your context?