

Today marks the first Sunday in three years, almost exactly to the week, that we are offering coffee and tea after the 11am service. It is astonishing that something so simple is so significant. It may not seem like much, but what it does is provide a place; it creates a space for us to gather and be with others. We cannot underestimate that act.

We understand that we are made in the image of God, and what is central to our understanding of God comes from the Trinity - that communion between Father and Son, interwoven by the Spirit, for all time. So if this Trinitarian God is the image we are made in, it makes sense that we need to be with others. By our creation we are social creatures built for communion with others for all time.

We've been marking a lot of three year anniversaries lately: the pancake supper, the World Day of Prayer, and now Sunday coffee and tea. What will be next?

But for Sunday coffee and tea to happen with any kind of sustained way, I need your help. So I

beseech you as many as are here present, to accompany me with a pure heart and sign up for a Sunday. A word of advice: Keep it simple so it doesn't become an onerous task or a competition with what was served last week, but rather something we can all offer to enrich our life together.

I suspect that, because we haven't been in the habit, what we discover is that we forgot what we were missing. What is gained from the act of sharing conversation over a cup of coffee or tea I assure you will be great. Look at Abraham and Sarah.

When Abraham and Sarah receive the news that they will become the parents of many nations, the promise is completely contrary to all the evidence. "Look at us! We're old," they said as they laughed out loud! There's no objective evidence to tell them this could happen. But something in Abraham believed it. And sure enough, Abraham and Sarah begot Isaac; and Isaac and Rebecca begot Jacob and Esau, and from them the twelve tribes of Israel were born. And from there we too are considered descendants of Abraham.

All of this promise, if you remember, was confirmed when three mysterious visitors arrived while Abraham sat under the old oak tree in Mamre. When he saw them coming off the desert Abraham immediately invited them in and offered them, you guessed it, a cup of water, which soon became cakes, milk and meat. It was over that hot beverage in the desert that the promise of a nation was confirmed.

It is important to know that it was a legal and ethical obligation to offer hospitality to strangers who may be in need of sustenance, and that is what they did: offer cakes, milk and some fresh meat. It's the same response that the father makes when he looks out to see a bedraggled stranger, his youngest son, thought to be dead, coming back home. "Let us celebrate, for this son of mine was dead, and is alive."

This whole promise to Abraham and Sarah is foundational to the Christian story. We are told that Abraham's faith was reckoned to him as righteousness. Against all the odds, against all the evidence, Abraham and Sarah had the faith in their old age to believe that what God said, and what the three visitors confirmed, would come to pass.



Much like believing that anyone could be raised from the dead. It cannot be true. All we have is the apostle's testimony to confirm, like Abraham's three visitors under the oak tree, that the resurrection is true.

Nicodemus, the pharisee, is struggling with the same thing that Abraham and Sarah in Mamre, Mary in Nazareth, and Thomas in the upper room struggled with: "How can this be?" they all ask. It defies all the evidence.

And so God sends his Son into a world of disbelief to give us something to hope for, something to cling to that defies the odds. So in our old age, or our wilderness, or our weakness we will not despair. Jesus becomes the serpent in the wilderness, the cursed one, the source of our death, wrapped on a pole and lifted up. So just as Moses lifted up a serpent on a pole in the wilderness and the people who looked at it were healed, like Abraham in Mamre, the Hebrews in the wilderness, Mary in Nazareth, Nicodemus and Thomas in Jerusalem, through faith, so are we.

And if you don't believe it, let's chat further over a cup of coffee.