

### Acts 3. 12-19

When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. 14 You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. 15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. 16 By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see. 17 "Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. 18 But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. 19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,

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Peter and John went to the temple to pray, and met a lame man on the way.. you can sing the rest at home!

They saw a need, and they knew it was beyond them, but not beyond God. In fact the need the man thought was simply money - he was begging. But they saw that his need was greater. So it was beyond them, but they reached up and asked God to help.

The reached out to their fellow human, with one hand, and reached up to God, with the other.

This is the Christian Way - to love God and love our neighbour

This is the Vision of St James - to pray and worship and serve our Lord Jesus

And to care and serve and connect with our friends, family, community and village.

To reach up to God and out to our community.

As we get to this Annual Meeting - the chance to look back at where we've been and what we've done, and to look forward to where we're going - its really good to be reminded of our purpose, our aim, our core vision.

If someone ever asks you what St James is about, what's its for, what we do.. I hope you can say - love God, love our neighbour.

### 2nd Reading.... Luke 24. 36-48

36 While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

37 They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. 38 He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 39 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?"

42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in their presence.

44 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things.

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So Jesus appears in his new resurrection body - this body that can appear and disappear, yet eat and drink. And of course they fail to understand! No one has ever seen anything like this before. Yet he points to the parts of the Scripture that foretold this, he explains it!

And he tells them they are witnesses - they have seen this stuff, so its their job to tell others.

Our Vision - love God and love neighbour - also needs fleshing out in resurrection bodies!  
So what if we say we love God - what does that look like?  
How do we love our neighbour?

And there are many ways we do those things, but there are 3 areas we are focussing on at the moment.

Firstly - To strengthen our discipleship, learning to speak about our faith and to encourage one another in holy living.

Ever since the first disciples the church has had be humble and learn - to dig into scriptures to hold on to the truths we find there. But also, just like the first disciples, to learn to be witnesses - to tell people what we see, what we experience, what we know. If we know God is love and that having a relationship with Jesus is a good thing - then we need to tell others! You would tell them of a good walk, or a good pub, or a good shop or wool supply - so why can't we tell them about something else good? We really have to work on this in order to fulfil our vision - that's why its one of our top 3 things to work on.

Secondly - we want to develop our services to that we might reach more people effectively and enable them to encounter God.

Our worship services, whether on zoom, or in St James, or at the school, or at the Rec - they're both the shop window for the church, where people browse and decided wether to join us or not - but they're also a means of reaching God, of reaching up to Jesus - like Peter and John did. So we need to work on these to make them open and accessible, but also deep and meaningful. It is not easy, and we're not there yet - but we're going to keep working on it.

Finally, we want to build on our many links with so many young people and draw them into a life of faith in our church.

If you look at the graphs in the report you can see that the number of children, that's under 16's, make up less than 1/6th of the congregation. We have so few children in Jim's Pilgrims and Little Jim's, yet we reach so many through Recreate and the school, and they are vital for the future life of the church. That's why we're currently advertising again for a part time Children and Families worker, to help bridge the gap and really see those young lives have a life changing encounter with Christ.

As our report shows, the church is involved in so many projects, charities, community work, apart from just these 3 aims. These are simply the most urgent, or the current need. We continue to attend to the pastoral care group, the church hall, Recreate and the like. In fact one of the areas we are really progressing on is our care for the Environment. Having got the Silver Eco-Church award we are now engaging with others in the preparations for COP26 in Glasgow in September. Becuase we love God, we love this world that he has made and given to us, and becuase we love our neighbour we want them to have a good clean world to live in. These things all add up together.

So this year we will continue to learn more about our faith, and encourage one another to be witnesses and evangelists. We will keep developing our services to refresh them so that refresh us, and we will, with God's help, make strides in our our children and families work.

Just like James and John, who needed God's help to love their neighbour, and just like the disciples who needed Jesus to open their mind to understand the scriptures, we will keep praying, for "with God, all things are possible" and without him "was not anything made that was made".