

“...Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ³⁷They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. ³⁸He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹Look 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." ⁴⁰When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he took it and ate it in their presence.”

“10 years younger in 10 days” – that was the title of the program advertised on TV this week. If only. If only our bodies could appear ten years younger in ten days – and without radical surgery! I didn’t watch the show but walked in at the end of it. They showed before and after shots of the couple who had been done over, and showed their reactions when they saw the “new me” and their “new spouse”. It was them but it was different, without the signs of ageing. And there was joy but disbelief at the same time.

There is a whole industry out there promising to turn back the clock for us with respect to our bodies, but the reality is it can only cover things up for a while and can only prolong the inevitable. The reality is we are all getting older and dying, one wrinkle at a time. Some of us just look better than others while it is happening, but no one escapes it.

Our faith, the Christian faith, doesn’t try to turn back the clock, instead it looks forward. Forward to nothing less than a resurrection of our bodies one day. A renewing, transforming and of this body of ours which is now ageing and dying. It will still be us, but it will be a new us, a permanently new us. And it is based not on radical surgery or crash diets but on a promise, on a gift of the one who was the first to rise from the dead, the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

After Easter, when Jesus rose from the dead he showed himself to his disciples. It was him, the same Jesus who lived and died. But it was Jesus with a new body, a risen, resurrected body. They didn’t believe it at first. They thought they were seeing a ghost. So Jesus says: **“Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹Look 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.” ⁴⁰When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet.”**

Jesus allows them to touch and see it was the same man who died on Good Friday. This was no ghost. It was no joke. They were not imagining things.

We usually can’t believe someone has died. The disciples couldn’t believe Jesus was alive! Luke says: **“They still did not believe it because of joy and amazement.”** It was too good to be true. When a loved one dies it is sometimes only when we view the body that we accept our loved ones have died. The disciples took some convincing Jesus was alive again! Jesus had to encourage them to see and touch his body to believe it was real. This was no wishful thinking on their part. No spiritual experience but a bodily experience, one they could see and touch.

And then Jesus says: **“What’s there to eat?”** - Sounds like kids. It’s a sure sign they are alive and well when want something to eat! We worry when they don’t eat. Jesus asks for food, even takes fish and eats it in front of them. Jesus’ body was real.

I’m glad Jesus showed himself bodily to the disciples and to hundreds of other people after Easter. It says he is alive and not a ghost or something they imagined. Ghosts don’t do that. Illusions don’t do that. Jesus did in front of them all. It says this was a real resurrection of the body and they and we are not being deceived.

It also says our bodies worth more than we think. As God raised Jesus bodily we are also somebody to God and we believe from God's word that he will raise us bodily when Christ appears again too.

It's funny how we are so preoccupied with our bodies in this life, and yet when we die we talk about the body as if it were just a shell to cast off while we float off to a better place. We imagine something called our soul is more important to God. It is trendy today to buy what some eastern religions teach – reincarnation -that after endless coming back in different bodies depending on how good you have been last time round. It says if you can perfect yourself enough you shake off your body and your soul will float off and becomes one with the universe.

Even if that were true who can perfect themselves? I'd have to look forward to becoming a dog next time round! In contrast the Christian faith is in someone who says "I forgive you all your sins because I died for them on the cross. I see you as perfect as you live in that forgiveness. One day I will raise and perfect your body too. That's my gift to you as your bodily risen Lord."

We said today and every Sunday in the face of ageing and sickness and death: *"I believe in the resurrection of the body."* I guess we have all sorts of questions about Christ's risen body and about the one we will get one day. 1 John 3 said to us today **"my dear friends we are now God's children. It is not yet clear what we will become. But we know that when Christ appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he really is"**. We will be bodily like the Jesus who rose from dead. It will be me but it will be like Christ somehow. With him we will eat and enjoy friends. And like him we will never die again. In 1 Corinthians 15 St Paul says (and we read these words at funerals): **"These bodies will die, but the bodies that are raised will live forever...These ugly and weak bodies will become beautiful and strong. As surely as there are physical bodies, there are spiritual bodies. And our physical bodies will be changed into spiritual bodies.....The bodies we now have are weak and can die. But they will be changed into bodies that are eternal."**

That Jesus rose in the body and promises we can look forward to a risen resurrected renewed and transformed body too ought to be a wonderful comfort to us body conscious people.

Now in this life we don't have to glorify the body and hang on to it and its beauty at all costs. Neither do we despair when our bodies are damaged, disfigured, or become sick, old, weak and die. Anyone who trusts Jesus and his resurrection for us can say: "My body is creation of God. My body is in his image, my body was died for with all its sin and guilt. My body may only be worth about \$1.50 in minerals and a bit of dirt. But it was worth Christ's life to God. My body will be raised because Christ's was. And my body too will share in the miracle of Easter.

As his church our priority is to share with the world the good news of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life through Jesus, but we also care for people's bodily needs - the sick, poor, hungry, unloved, broken bodies because bodies matter to God, not just souls.

Jesus died bodily to forgive us. He rose bodily. And in Communion he says "take and eat, this is my body given for you, this is my blood shed for the forgiveness of sins". He becomes one with my body and can do that for Christians all over the world this morning all because of his risen body. And after it I bless you saying "the body and blood of Christ strengthen and preserve you in body and soul until life everlasting". Christ is within you to keep you for the day of your own resurrection.

"I believe in the resurrection of the body" - Christ's body and mine. That's our Easter faith. That's worth remembering when you look in the mirror tonight and put on the anti ageing cream. Its worth believing when you are sick in bed and it's worth hoping for in the face of death. And it's all because of Easter.