

Sermon – Easter I – Low Sunday – St George’s Day

Let’s begin this talk by finding out a little more about our patron saint, St George. Who can tell me anything about him?

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The truth about Saint George may surprise you.

George wasn’t English but a Palestinian soldier and lived at the beginning of the 4th century. He was martyred – that is, he was killed for his Christian beliefs – in Lydda, a town in Palestine about the year 304, at the beginning of what was known as the Diocletian persecutions. George quickly became known throughout the East as ‘the Great Martyr’. English churches dedicated to St George existed before the Norman conquest in 1066.

The story of George slaying the dragon came about through a mix up. George was often confused with St Michael, who is usually pictured wearing armour. He was also confused with the story of Perseus’ slaying of a sea monster, which is also connected with Lydda.

George replaced Edward the Confessor as patron saint of England following the Crusades in the 13th century when

soldiers returned enthusiastic about him; his position in national life was secured when Edward 3rd made him a patron of the Order of the Garter in the 14th century, and there he has remained in our national life for over 700 years.

The truth about St George may surprise us, especially the fact that he wasn’t English.

Yet the truth about people often surprises us.

Despite Jesus telling his disciples in advance that he would rise from the dead, when it actually happened his disciples were still surprised – in fact they were so surprised the bible uses words like awe-struck, dumbfounded and even terrified. It’s not what they were expecting.

And as we heard in our bible reading, the disciples then had to keep surprising people with the truth of what had happened. It took some believing.

As Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Rainbows, Brownies and Guides you too are people that surprise others. That puts you all in the amazing company of Jesus and St George.

You all surprise other people because you try to live up to your promises to help others.

This commitment to helping others is rooted in a very simple act that Jesus did the night before he died.

Just before he ate his final meal with his friends, the disciples, Jesus took some water and a towel and washed his disciples' feet. This act of kindness angered the disciples because it wasn't what they expected; feet washing was for servants not for important people like Jesus.

But Jesus didn't go in for those kinds of silly rules or conventions. He wanted to show his disciples that being a servant to others – as illustrated by the washing of feet – remains the only way to truly discover our own humanity; helping others is how we discover the full joy of being a human being.

People, including many of you, give themselves to others in countless – often burdensome - tasks every day.

Sometimes we don't have a choice about this; perhaps you have to care for someone else or certain jobs are required of you every day.

Whether through necessity or choice, whether it is always fun or often simply very hard work, helping others helps us to learn more about ourselves and what it means to be a human being. It shapes our character. It simply isn't possible to become who God wants you to be simply through enjoying yourself all the time. It is only possible through giving your own life to others as Jesus did.

As we've heard from the lips of Baden-Powell: *the real way to get happiness is by giving out happiness to other people.*

Please keep on surprising other people with your commitment to others, your sense of duty, your desire to contribute to your family, school and community.

Not only will you keep surprising others, you will keep inspiring them too, and the world will be all the better for it. Amen.