

I often turn to the 7 I am sayings of Jesus recorded in John's gospel for reassurance when I'm feeling a little out of theological sorts. You may remember, I chose one of them for my ordination "I am the vine". Individually and collectively they continually help me tease out a deeper insight about my relationship with Christ.

We heard another of the I am sayings in this morning's reading 'I am the gate'. The original Greek word 'thura' can also be translated as 'I am the door'. I prefer the analogy of Jesus being the door not only because it echoes his words in Matthew 7:7 'Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you' but also the key to opening that door lies in the final words of our reading: 'I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.'

He is saying that anyone who goes through him will be cared for – they will have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of. That doesn't sound much like the materialistic world I've grown up in; splash the cash and enjoy life to the full or perhaps more prudently, the more you earn the more you can pay into your pension scheme so you have money to provide for your care in later life, you haven't lived unless every item on your bucket list has been ticked off. Why drink stale coffee at the back of the plane when you can afford to turn left at the door and drink champagne? And so on.

But the reality is, sitting in the luxury of first class doesn't get you to your destination any quicker than sitting in row 32 at the back of the plane. Some might seek to lead a full life through pleasure, possessions, position, or pursuits. Yet that doesn't shield them from life's difficulties we all having to face today. In lockdown, they might have a better quality of wine to drink or food to eat but they still have to face the same problems and restrictions imposed on everyone else.

No Jesus is saying that life is found in him; in the person of Jesus. He said 'I am the way the truth and the life'. Jesus is promising abundant life but in a totally different way. It is found in a sustained relationship with him.

Can you remember the words Jesus said to Martha before he called Lazarus out of his tomb? "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die." Eternal life; that's our hope and Jesus' promise. That is life in abundance.

I've just completed a large written assignment on Holy Communion as part of my Curate training and I wrote that it is in the act of sharing bread and wine that I feel closest to Jesus. It's as if Jesus is standing beside like an elder brother who puts a loving and encouraging arm around my shoulder. At the same time, as I'm standing or kneeling alongside members of the church family I'm metaphorically putting my arm around them too.

Holy Communion is not a buffet where we can pick and choose what we want to eat and drink, rather its a complete meal to be enjoyed in the very best of company and fellowship. It doesn't matter how early or late you arrive to attend the meal; everything will always be there in abundance.

It really is all about relationship. In Jesus we can find meaning, purpose, fulfilment, peace, forgiveness and life in all its fullness. Yes there will be plenty of bumps along the way; yes we might not have the material riches of this world, but we share something much more substantial and longer lasting. That is the worthiness endowed on us by Christ.

Just before receiving communion the liturgy invites us to say that we are not worthy to gather up the crumbs from God's table. Yet, through God's grace and Christ's brokenness I am made worthy to immediately go forward and become worthy. That to me is what life is all about.