

Sermon for Sunday 21 April 2024 – the Fourth Sunday of Easter (Baptism)

Revd Canon Simon Pitcher, Rector

Acts 4.5-12; Psalm 23; 1 John 3.16-24; Mark 1.4-11

I wonder, does anybody here like jigsaw puzzles? Anybody like jigsaws? You do, Sue? Elke? Anybody else? Do any of you like jigsaw puzzles? No? You do? You haven't got the time? No, I know what you mean. I don't have very much patience for jigsaw puzzles, so I start, and about 30 seconds later, I want to do something else. But have you all got a jigsaw puzzle? Some of you got a piece of a jigsaw puzzle, yeah? If you've got a piece of jigsaw, do you want to have a look at it and see if you can tell me what you think the whole picture would be when that jigsaw was finished? What do you reckon it would be? Any guesses? Any clues? Sorry? Clouds. Mary thinks clouds? Sorry? Trains, you think, Clare? Okay, right. Anybody else? No idea? No? Okay. It's very difficult, isn't it, to tell what the whole jigsaw is going to look like when we can't see the big picture. I'll come back and tell you what it is in a minute. Has ever been to Sandringham House, where the Queen used to have holidays? Have you been there? Yeah?

If you go around Sandringham House, we noticed one time that the Royal family like a good jigsaw puzzle. They have in their front room there, if that's the right description of it, a big table and a jigsaw. When people are coming in and out of the room, they put the picture together. They spend a bit of time putting a few pieces in, and it might take them a week or two to complete the jigsaw. We tried that one time at home, we thought, well, we'll do that. I think we had a jigsaw of a plate of baked beans or something like that. It took forever and all the pieces ended up on the floor, so we didn't do a very good job. But it's very difficult, isn't it, if you haven't got the picture to know what it is that you're trying to put together? Someone told me recently that they like to do a jigsaw puzzle without the picture. They like to work out what it is as they go along, which I think is amazing, isn't it? Really, really clever. The jigsaw puzzle that you've got just happens to be, as Claire said, it just happens to be a steam train going through Halstead. I just picked it at random from the back. That's the picture that your jigsaw pieces would put together.

All right? You might ask, what on earth has that got to do with the baptism this morning? Because we're here for Freya's baptism. What does a jigsaw got to do with that? Well, at the end of the last reading that I just read. Jesus has been baptised. He comes out of the River Jordan and he hears some words from heaven, 'You are my son, the beloved, with you I am well pleased. You are my son, the beloved, with you I'm well pleased'. We're invited to hear those words for ourselves when we're baptised, so God is saying to Freya today, 'You are my child. I love you and welcome'. Why would we want to baptise Freya? What are we baptising her into? What are we baptising her into? We're baptising her into the family of the Church, which is a worldwide family. It also goes way back in history to the time of Jesus, and will go way forward to the end of time whenever God decides that is. So Freya is becoming part of God's big picture, and she's like one piece in the big jigsaw.

As people are baptised, they join the Kingdom of Heaven, God's big plan for all that exists, all that has existed, all that will exist. We take our parts in God's big picture. Now, we can't tell what that picture is going to finally look like, but we add pieces in each generation, and Freya is a piece being added today. She forms part of the big picture of God's plan. Only God can see what that whole picture will look like in the end. But he says to her, 'You are my child, I love you. Welcome into the big picture'. Of course, what are you all doing here today? You're not just here to watch, because in a jigsaw, every piece joins together, doesn't it? Every piece depends on every other piece to form the complete picture. We don't know what Freya is going to grow up to be like. We don't know what she's going to become. But her parents, her family, her friends are going to be part of that growing, developing picture. Part of the story that you're promising today is to help her to know as she grows up the love of God for her so that when she knows his love, it helps her to become the person that he intends her to be.

So today we begin that journey. God can see the big picture for her. We're all joined together in the whole picture that is his kingdom. And today we add her into that picture. In Jesus' name, Amen.