

For fear of the Jews.

They went for the ultimate lockdown for fear of the Jews.

Terrified that what they'd done to him they'd do to them.

They were right to be worried - in the early days of the church  
thousands of innocents died for their allegiance to Jesus.

Were Christianity still a crime,

would the authorities have enough on you to convict?

They locked out those who threatened them,

those who were different from them, those other than them.

A them-and-us mentality which leads to rows

fight, wars, pogroms, ghettos, final solutions...

Rowan Williams said that when any group walls itself in,

peep over the wall and at the other side is Christ waving to you.

'There are no them and us, only us,'

a wise politician said during the Scottish Referendum.

For fear of the Jews.

But the disciples were Jews, every single one of them.

It's not what you lock out, but what you lock in...

They were frightened of themselves,

what they were capable of, or rather not capable of.

When it came to the crunch, they had all forsaken him and fled.

Betrayed the very love of their life.

'I tell you I do not even know this man of whom you speak,'

Peter shrieked in the Courtyard of the High Priest,

warming his hands by the fire whilst his Lord shivered in terror.

One of them, Judas, was so mortified that he took his own life.

I once took a confirmation in South Wales where the vicar

got each candidate to explain a line of the creed to me.

One lad drew the short straw with 'He descended unto hell.'

His explanation startled me with

'Jesus descended unto hell to comfort his good friend, Judas.'

For fear of the Jews; for fear of themselves.

For fear of **the Jew**, him, Jesus, the ultimate Jew.

We have this rosy view of the disciples eager for resurrection,  
but they probably utterly dreaded it, because boy, would they  
be in for it if he came back: ‘You dirty double-crossing rats!’

But then he was in the midst,

locked doors and blocked tombs were no match for him.

No recrimination whatsoever, just Peace be with you,

**שְׁלוֹם מֵעַלְיְכֶם**, the most generous of Jerusalem greetings.

In Dennis Potter’s play, the Son of Man,

Jesus is brought before Pilate, blindfolded and beaten,

faced by Rome in all her brutal power.

The blindfold is roughly torn off, and blinking in the light,

Christ looks Pilate in the eye: You’ve no need to be frightened.

The risen Christ says the same words to all disciples

through the ages who are locked in fear, paralysed by it.

**שְׁלוֹם מֵעַלְיְכֶם**: You’ve no need to be frightened.’