

Christ Church, Ipswich

Sunday 18th April 2021

Third Sunday of Easter

with Neil

Hello, I hope you are keeping well. I'm glad to be back with you again this week. Our readings for this Sunday, the third Sunday of Easter, are Psalm 4 and Luke 24:36b-48.

Let us worship God together:

A prayer of approach

Lord God, whose arms are always open to us,
we come before you today
with hearts and minds open to receive from you.
Lead us to understand who you are and what you have done,
and what you require of us as witnesses.
In Jesus' name.

Amen

R&S 234 Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord

*Alleluia, alleluia,
give thanks to the risen Lord,
Alleluia, alleluia,
give praise to his name.*

Jesus is Lord of all the earth,
he is the King of creation.

Spread the good news o'er all the earth,
Jesus has died and has risen.

We have been crucified with Christ,
now we shall live forever.

Come let us praise the living God,
joyfully sing to our Saviour.

Donald Fishel. (1950-)
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A prayer of adoration

Lord, who understands our every need,
we adore you for stilling our turmoil,
for being the calm in the storm,
our anchor in the deep,
and the safe port awaiting us always.

Amen.

A prayer of confession

God, we confess that when distress comes knocking at our door,
 all that we have learned and should know
 often goes flying out of the window.
 Our minds in disarray,
 we fail to turn to trusted sources of help.
 Forgive us for forgetting how to seek you.
 We forget your sustaining Word in Scripture,
 your presence when we turn to you in prayer,
 the calm that is to be found when we seek you in community.
 We are sorry for turning in on ourselves,
 our minds going round in circles.
 Come, risen Lord, break the cycle of our despair.

Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

When our understanding is dark, clouded by dismay,
 fearful and lacking in faith,
 we know that you understand, gracious and loving Lord.
 Shine your light on us
 and banish the dark thoughts that overwhelm us;
 forgive us the deeds committed
 while fearful and bewildered,
 and lead us forward in the light of your love.

Amen.

A prayer of praise

Lord, you have always been our host.
 When you first came into the world we call ours,
 shepherds and kings were your guests.
 When you accepted hospitality in the homes of others,
 you turned the tables and became the host,
 feeding hearts and souls through your teaching.
 When you came to the disciples, newly risen,
 you took charge and saw to their needs of mind and body.
 We praise you, Jesus, ground of our being,
 ground of our believing,
 for standing among us in your risen power,
 host to the world that is yours – not ours.

Amen.

Old Testament Reading Psalm 4 (NRSV)

Confident Plea for Deliverance from Enemies
To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Psalm of David.

- ¹ Answer me when I call, O God of my right!
 You gave me room when I was in distress.
 Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer.
- ² How long, you people, shall my honour suffer shame?
 How long will you love vain words, and seek after lies? *Selah*
- ³ But know that the Lord has set apart the faithful for himself;
 the Lord hears when I call to him.

- ⁴When you are disturbed, do not sin;
ponder it on your beds, and be silent. *Selah*
- ⁵Offer right sacrifices,
and put your trust in the Lord.
- ⁶There are many who say, 'O that we might see some good!
Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord!'
- ⁷You have put gladness in my heart
more than when their grain and wine abound.
- ⁸I will both lie down and sleep in peace;
for you alone, O Lord, make me lie down in safety.

Gospel Reading **Luke 24:36b-48 (NRSV)**

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

^{36b} Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' ³⁷ They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸ He said to them, 'Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.' ⁴⁰ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹ While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate in their presence.

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶ and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.'

Reflection

The two disciples have now returned to Jerusalem after their walk to Emmaus and back. Their conversation with Jesus on the Emmaus road has brought some comfort but may well have raised yet more questions. Luke follows his 'Emmaus road encounter' story with today's story, which he places on the evening of the first Easter Sunday. So, at this stage, the disciples have now heard the testimony of the women (24:8-11), a report of the two on their way to Emmaus (24:33, 35) and they know of an appearance to Peter (24:12, 34). Still, they are in emotional turmoil which no doubt includes shock and grief at Jesus' death, and confusion and disbelief regarding the disappearance of his body.

We then read that 'Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'" As Jesus appears among them, they think he is a ghost (24:37) and at first, it proves rather difficult for them to be convinced otherwise! Despite all the accounts they have already heard, merely hearing such testimony is not sufficient to lead them to believe. In fact, even when Jesus has shown them his hands and feet and has eaten, revealing to them that he is not a ghost or a vision and that there is a continuity with his earthly body (24:39-42), it is still not enough to provoke their faith, despite their emotional response of joy (24:41). I find their state at this stage fascinating and remarkable! They are experiencing 'joy' (and what a wonderful joy they must have felt!) while 'disbelieving' and 'still wondering'. There was so much going on, so much to process, so much to consider. What wonderful joy they must have felt in this mysterious moment, this amazing encounter, even though fear and failing faith linger.

What changes this for the disciples? Well, the turning point in this story occurs when Jesus explains the Scriptures to them and they begin to understand who he is. It appears that for belief to happen, Jesus must interpret the Scriptures for them (24:44-47) just as he had done in the previous story which left the two disciples saying to one another "were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" (24:32). It appears that for Luke, as Methodist Minister and writer Michael Townsend astutely explains, 'the bare fact of the resurrection is not the most

important thing: what matters is what it means. Until Jesus has interpreted the meaning to the disciples, they neither understand nor fully believe. However, once they have understood it, they are commissioned to be witnesses both to the fact and to its meaning (24:48). If we gather for worship with attentive and open hearts and minds, listening for what the risen Christ says to us through the Scriptures, ...we too may discern his presence and become witnesses to these things in our day and generation.'

Let's be open to encounters with the risen Lord today and may we be blessed with the joy, wonderful joy that comes in his presence. Let's be attentive, open hearted and open minded as we worship, as we reflect upon the Scriptures and as we consider their meaning in their original context as well as what God may want to say to us today. And lastly, as we notice that the disciples experienced times of confusion and anxiety while on their journey of faith, let's find encouragement here, there's encouragement for each of us here, as well as a precious opportunity to explore how we respond, emotionally in different situations. What would help our minds to be open and reassured even when we feel emotional turmoil and confusion, and even disbelief? I pray that in such moments as these we would each find comfort in the words of Scripture and the peace which 'surpasses all understanding' (Phil 4:7) in the presence of the risen One. Amen.

Let us pray:

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Peace be with you' –
they responded with turmoil.

Jesus said, 'Have you anything to eat?' –
they served him fish.

Jesus opened their minds –
they became his witnesses.

So, Lord, may we too find peace in your service,
with opened minds and hearts on fire.

Amen.

R&S 522 From heaven you came, helpless babe,

From heaven you came, helpless babe,
entered our world, your glory veiled;
not to be served, but to serve,
and give your life that we might live

*This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.*

There in the garden of tears,
my heavy load he chose to bear;
his heart with sorrow was torn,
'Yet not my will but yours', he said.

Come see his hands and his feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space
to cruel nails surrendered.

So let us learn how to serve,
and in our lives enthrone him;
each other's needs to prefer,
for it is Christ we're serving.

Our prayers of intercession

Lord God who has called us to faith,
in faith we pray for the needs of others.
For the world and its people,
Lord, we pray.

Today, we pray for our Queen, who has ruled for as long as many of us can remember, and longer than many of us have lived. In her loss and her grief may she find comfort in the companionship of others, support from family and friends, and strength in her faith in God and life eternal. For all of the Royal family in their grief and change of circumstance, some taking up new responsibilities in new ways and with new purpose, and in their support and upholding of each other.
For the world and its people,
Lord, we pray.

We pray for all who grieve for the loss of loved ones, family or friends, near or far away. Especially those who are bereaved a long way from family who can't travel to be with them to offer comfort and support. In their loss, in their grief, in their solitude may they find a calm centre and be upheld by their faith, their friendship and their neighbours.
For the world and its people,
Lord, we pray.

We pray for those whose bodies are ravaged by pain and illness, by disfigurement and disability. For those fearful of treatment, those who have recently received medical care and for those waiting for treatment. For Irene Gale, who has been admitted to Colchester Hospital. For Phyllis Davies, currently in residential care, for Joan, Chikondi and all those among us with health concerns.
For the world and its people,
Lord, we pray.

We pray for those of faith and those of no faith, for those with purpose and those with no purpose in life. For those who have a clear direction and those who flounder uncertain for life in all its complexities. For those whose mental health causes them pain, anguish, confusion and loneliness, for those who feel abandoned, unwanted, unloved and un-helped.
For the world and its people,
Lord, we pray.

For countries at war with other countries and within themselves, for their people who fear for their lives and stability, for those made homeless and jobless and offered nothing but an uncertain future. For those countries where violence comes all too easily to the fore and where it is hard to grasp the real reason behind it. Remembering countries at war where their people are damaged, isolated, abused, for Myanmar, Ethiopia, Mozambique and closer to home for the people of Ireland and Northern Ireland, for Catholics and Protestants, those of faith and those of none.
For the world and its people,
Lord, we pray.

For Christians trying to work out the best way to live out their lives, true to their faith, to the Gospel, to their calling. Trying in these days to do the best they can, pulled this way and that. Trying to look beyond the present to the future, beyond their immediate neighbourhood to the worldwide family, for we are all God's children. Help us to catch a wider more inclusive vision of the needs of the world and its people for unless we are all fed no one is satisfied, unless we are all inoculated no one is safe. We remember before you in pray the wonderful work of the Ipswich Fair Trade shop, now open again and pray your blessing upon this work, all staff and volunteers and for those in developing counties who will benefit from a fair and just reward for their endeavours.
For the world and its people,
Lord, we pray.

For countries with surging Covid cases, for those with poor infrastructure and resources, for countries with little PPE and no vaccines and no realistic prospect of national immunisation any time soon. For those engaged in trying to resolve such issues no matter what faith, colour, creed, it is their need that needs to be met along with providing sufficient food and housing, safety and stability.

For the world and its people,

Lord, we pray.

For ourselves we pray that our ears may be used to hear the cries of the needy, that our eyes be used to see the needs around us, that our voices be used to speak up for the marginalised and the poor, that our hands be used to reach out in comfort and that our lives be used to improve the lives of others.

For the world and its people,

Lord, we pray. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.

Amen.

The Blessing

Go now in peace to love and serve the Lord,
and may the blessing of our gracious God,
Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer,
be upon us and all those we love,
this day and always.

Amen.

The Grace

Holding each other in our prayers, we say together:

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all, for evermore.**

Amen.

With love and best wishes,

Neil