

19th April 2020 - 1st Sunday after Easter 2020

Call to Worship

Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

I say to the Lord, 'You are my Lord;

I have no good apart from you.' (Psalm 16:1)

STF 345 And can it be, that I should gain

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| 1) And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died he for me, who caused his pain?
For me, who him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
Amazing love! How can it be
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me? | 3) Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray -
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light,
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee. |
| 2) He left his Father's throne above
So free, so infinite his grace
Emptied himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race.
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For, O my God, it found out me!
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For, O my God, it found out me! | 4) No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in him, is mine!
Alive in him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ, my own.
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ, my own. |

Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Lord we praise you that you have shown to us that you are not a dead hero, merely to be honoured and revered, but you are a risen being, enabled to share in our daily living.

We praise you that you not only died to be a Saviour of the future but that you also rose to life that you might be our Lord of the present.

We praise you for the sense of peace, hope, joy and meaning you give to our daily life. Without you we would be lost, life worthless and the future empty.

Without your presence our Christian lives are a meaningless experience; our worship and service a meaningless sham.

We praise you for your appearances to the disciples in the ordinary moments of life and your continual revelation of self to men and women, through the centuries since, and, that you have come into our lives in the now of time.

Through your presence you enable us to declare the Good News of Jesus with joy and hope even in the darkest times of life.

Lord you have made us for fellowship and companionship with others and with you. You have designed our lives such that we need you and that we can never know a lasting sense of peace and purpose outside of you.

We confess our foolish attempts to live our lives in our own strength; in these days we have realized how much we need you and each other. Lord when we are down and filled with despair break into our space that we may know you are with us, experience your peace and find your calling. Cleanse and renew our lives that we may live for your praise and trust in your love. Amen.

As we sit in quiet speak into our hearts your words of Grace – Your sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God. **Amen.**

STF 508 Purify my heart

Purify my heart,
Let me be as gold
And precious silver.
Purify my heart,
Let me be as gold,
Pure gold.

*Refiner's fire,
My heart's one desire
Is to be holy
Set apart for You Lord.
I choose to be holy,
Set apart for You my master,
Ready to do Your will.*

Purify my heart,
Cleanse me from within
And make me holy.
Purify my heart,
Cleanse me from my sin,
Deep within.

Reading: John 20: 19-31

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

Jesus and Thomas

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

The Purpose of This Book

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

STF 629 God of my faith, I offer you my doubt (Read – not sung)

- 1) God of my faith, I offer you my doubt,
For life at times seems far too dark for me,
And my belief becomes more insecure,
When worldly cares produce uncertainty.
- 2) God of my hope, I offer you my fear,
When I am scared by my anxiety,
When all I hear is suffering and woe,
In all my shadows you will walk with me.
- 3) God of my joy, I offer you my grief,
When I sink down in sadness or despair,
When in depression I cannot be touched,
I pray in all my depths to find you there.
- 4) God of my love, I offer you my pain,
When I'm alone and feel nobody cares,
In aching age or in rejected youth,
You bear my cross and dry my human tears.
- 5) God of my life, I offer you my dreams,
Light in the darkness where I hide from view,
Light in my faith, my hope, my joy and love,
Light in my life and all my life in you.

Prayers of intercession.

We pray for those whose lives will never be the same due to their own illness or the illness of a close loved one.

We pray for those whose lives will never be the same due to bereavement and loss.

We pray for those whose lives will never be the same for their employment has gone or their business has collapsed.

We pray for those whose lives will never be the same through their experience of working in the NHS in these difficult times.

We pray for those whose lives will never be the same for society has realised their importance.

We pray for those whose lives will never be the same through sharing conversations with neighbours.

We pray for those whose lives will never be the same for they have found new-friendships through this time of isolation and distancing.

We pray for your Church that we may not go back to doing just what we used to do but continue to explore what new things we can do with and for you.

The Lord's Prayer

Reflection

Have you ever been asked to do something you did not feel up to?

When I was about 21 a leader in the Ecumenical movement, in Kent, asked I if I would lead the worship at a series of seminars on Life in the Spirit in Canterbury. There was going to be well over 100 people present. It was one thing to play the guitar in a prayer meeting or a fellowship group in a community where I was known but to do something in a larger context amongst strangers and be up front? I hesitated and suggested that I did not feel able to do it. Geoff replied I would not have asked you if I thought you couldn't do it.

As Jesus entered the room and stood amongst the disciples there was a great shock at his sudden appearance; it was their first sight of the risen Jesus.

"Peace be with you," he said; a normal Jewish greeting but it was something bigger than that. For they surely needed calming down like the wind and the waves had when they had been in the boat on the Sea of Galilee. He had peace to give in a way that no one else ever could, for Peace was at the heart of his being.

He showed them his hands and side and as, I have said elsewhere we find my favourite understatement in the whole of the scriptures, if not anywhere recorded. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."

How would they have reacted? I can't fully imagine. You see people celebrate wildly when their football team scores a goal; this was bigger than the Baggies or even Wolves winning the FA Cup.

This truly was a world changing moment how would you have reacted?

Was his second "Peace be with you" a trying to calm the disciples down and to get back some semblance of order like the speaker in the House of Commons?

Then another real shock! "As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

"I have a job for you to do," said Jesus. I am sending you to continue doing what I have been doing; telling people of God's love and His Kingdom.

He breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

I have a job for you to do, to offer forgiveness of sins; to be involved in the work of God, nothing more nothing less. But I will give you the support that you need; the full resource package is there for use.

Now what do you think? We hear nothing of their reaction; just that Thomas was not with them.

Did they feel up to the task? Did they know what it was? Well they had seven weeks to get their head around it before Pentecost.

These last few weeks have thrown up challenges to individuals and communities that we could not see coming. For many there was little time to prepare; there has not been the resources needed; there has been frustration, there has been pain hurt and loss.

As Church and Kingdom people there have been challenges and tasks for us to do that we may not have felt able to do; we may not have fully succeeded but we have learnt as we have gone on; we have "Zoomed" and "WhatsApped", Skyped, Facetimed and Jitsi'd', we have loved and cared in new ways with refocused priority. We have discovered that the phone call is a tool in pastoral care, not to ultimately replace the face-to-face but to supplement it. That online prayer meetings and fellowship groups can support and encourage alongside the face-to-face gatherings.

The early disciples did not get it all right, all the time, but equipped with the power of the Spirit they had a go and with the grace of God, lives and communities were changed.

As we look to the future we will, hopefully, not go back to life as it was in the community and in the Church for what we need, by God's grace, is transformed communities and a resurrection life Church.

With apologies to Graham Kendrick, All I once held dear, built my ministry upon, all the church revered and argued to keep, all I once thought gain I have counted loss, spent and worthless now compared to what can be by God's grace.

We pause and then we shall sing –

STF 489 All I once held dear

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|---|---|
| 1) All I once held dear,
Built my life upon,
All this world reveres,
And wars to own,
All I once thought gain,
I have counted loss;
Spent and worthless now,
Compared to this. | Ch) <i>Knowing you, Jesus, knowing You
There is no greater thing
You're my all, you're the best,
You're my joy, my righteousness,
And I love you, Lord.</i> |
| 2) Now my heart's desire
Is to know You more,
To be found in You
And known as Yours.
To possess by faith
What I could not earn,
All surpassing gift
Of righteousness. | 3) Oh to know the power
Of Your risen life,
And to know You in
Your sufferings.
To become like You
In Your death, my Lord
So with You to live
And never die. |

Dismissal Blessing

Because he is the one who called you, he is the one who sends you! Go now in his name and glorify the Lord. Amen.

And may the Blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you this day and forevermore. Amen