

## April 26 2020 Morning Service

### Call to worship

O God, whose blessed Son showed himself to his disciples in the breaking of bread: Open the eyes of our faith, that we may behold him in all his redeeming work; through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

### All Heaven Declares (STF 293)

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| 1) All heaven declares<br>The glory of the risen Lord.<br>Who can compare<br>With the beauty of the Lord?<br>Forever He will be<br>The Lamb upon the throne.<br>I gladly bow the knee<br>And worship Him alone. | 2) I will proclaim<br>The glory of the risen Lord.<br>Who once was slain<br>To reconcile us to God.<br>Forever You will be<br>The Lamb upon the throne.<br>I gladly bow the knee<br>And worship You alone. |
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### Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Holy God, you alone we worship. You alone are worthy of all praise.

You brought the universe into being and sustain it by your power. You showed your love for us all by sending your Son to live our life, to die our death, and to be raised to life. Death could not hold him. The tomb could not imprison him. Darkness could not put out the Light of the World. Hate was defeated by love, and evil was overcome through goodness.

Through him you save the human race and bless all creation. You indwell us by the Holy Spirit and pour your treasures into redeemed lives. You assure us of eternal life and of your presence for ever.

To you, God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, belong all glory, honour and praise, now and for ever.  
**Amen**

Lord God, you enable us through your Son to live in resurrection power.

Forgive us when we settle for second-rate lives, lived through our own strength and wisdom, doing our own thing rather than following your way of sacrifice and victory.

Forgive us for those parts of our lives that we have kept for ourselves and not completely surrendered to you, because we have not fully understood your loving purposes.

Forgive us for negativity about ourselves or others, for attitudes of doubt instead of faith, for thoughts, words and deeds that belong to the tomb and not to resurrection.

God of mercy, you wash away our sins and call them to mind no more.

Through your Son you redeem our broken lives and enable us to walk in the light of life.

We receive your assurance of forgiveness, your affirmation of our place in your family as your sons and daughters, and we choose to follow the path of service and joy. **Amen.**

### **Reading: 1 Peter 1:17-23**

You call him Father, when you pray to God, who judges all people by the same standard, according to what each one has done; so then, spend the rest of your lives here on earth in reverence for him. For you know what was paid to set you free from the worthless manner of life handed down by your ancestors. It was not something that can be destroyed, such as silver or gold; it was the costly sacrifice of Christ, who was like a lamb without defect or flaw. He had been chosen by God before the creation of the world and was revealed in these last days for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from death and gave him glory; and so your faith and hope are fixed on God.

Now that by your obedience to the truth you have purified yourselves and have come to have a sincere love for other believers, love one another earnestly with all your heart. For through the living and eternal word of God you have been born again as the children of a parent who is immortal, not mortal.

### **Reflection 1**

In this passage Peter reminds the churches of the great price that Jesus paid to redeem us from our sins and make us part of God's own family. He points out the high value of this.

On what does our culture place a high value? Money and outward shows of wealth? Property and land? Fame and popularity perhaps?

Thankfully there's more to it than this. We also value friendships and companionship, commitment and sacrifice. The pandemic has caused many people to think deeply about what is really valuable. Thursday evenings at 8 has become one of my favourite times of the week as we collectively thank our NHS and other keyworkers for all that they do, through clapping of hands, bashing of various bits of culinary equipment and various other ways of making noise. The value of their work has come sharply into focus in these unusual times.

Perhaps many of our values and assumptions about life are now being challenged.

I like to think that when normality returns it will not be back to the old business as usual, but that wealth will have been redefined. I'm hopeful that many more people will see that our wealth actually consists not in figures on a spreadsheet somewhere but in:

- Community
- Each other
- A healthy natural world, which sustains us physically and mentally, giving us the foundation for us to live creative and fruitful lives.
- Spiritual values

Maybe the time will come when it will be culturally unacceptable to sweep away parts of the wealth of our natural world in order to increase the fake and transient wealth of figures on a

balance sheet. Perhaps one day all people will be treated as valuable human beings simply because they are human and therefore inherently valuable.

To go back to Peter, he points out the value of the sacrifice that Jesus made for our sakes. This is far more valuable than silver or gold. From our point of view salvation is a gift of God's free grace, but we must value the price which he paid in order that we may have it. Christ has rescued us from an empty and meaningless and unfulfilling way of life and brought us into a life of fullness with God at its centre.

If we truly value what God has done for us, then we will overflow with thankfulness and we will live a life that is honouring to God. We will love one another. We will live right, not because we have to, but because we want to.

### **The Day of Resurrection (STF 311)**

- 1) The day of resurrection,  
Earth, tell it out abroad!  
The passover of gladness,  
The passover of God!  
From death to life eternal,  
From earth unto the sky,  
Our Christ has brought us over  
With hymns of victory.
- 2) Our hearts be pure from evil,  
That we may see aright  
The Lord in rays eternal  
Of resurrection light;  
And, listening to his accents,  
May hear, so calm and plain,  
His own 'All hail!' and, hearing,  
May raise the victor strain.
- 3) Now let the heavens be joyful,  
Let earth her song begin,  
The round world keep high triumph,  
And all that is therein;  
Let all things seen and unseen  
Their notes of gladness blend,  
For Christ the Lord is risen,  
Our joy that has no end.

### **Reading: Luke 24:13-35**

#### **On the road to Emmaus**

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles<sup>[a]</sup> from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognising him.

He asked them, 'What are you discussing together as you walk along?'

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, 'Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?'

'What things?' he asked.

'About Jesus of Nazareth,' they replied. 'He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And

what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.'

He said to them, 'How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going further. But they urged him strongly, 'Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?'

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, 'It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.' Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognised by them when he broke the bread.

## **Reflection 2**

Two of them were on a journey. Two of what? It's clear from the text that these were two of the disciples. They were people who normally would have recognised Jesus. They understood that he was someone important, sent by God.

The gospel writer relates that one of them was called Cleopas. The other is not named in this passage. I remember that not too many years ago the children of the Sunday Club at the United Church, Lye, took it upon themselves to decide that this unnamed disciple was called Molly! Of course, we don't know what she (or he) was called, but I think that's a lovely idea!

More about Molly later, but first let's go back to Cleopas. When a gospel writer names a person there's usually a good reason for it. I'm reading a book at the moment called *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, which states that there is good evidence to think that the gospel accounts are based on the testimony of people who actually were present at the events described, and that gospel writers give us subtle clues about who their sources of information were. The mention of the name of Cleopas by Luke indicates that he may have been known to Luke, and may have been the source of Luke's information about this event that he describes. He may even have become a leader in the early Jerusalem church by the time that Luke wrote his gospel. The vividness of this passage could surely only have come from an account of someone who was there.

Something prevented Cleopas, and Molly, from recognising Jesus. However, when Jesus broke the bread their eyes were opened and they recognised him.

I'm reminded of Mary Magdalene in the garden on Easter morning. She didn't recognise Jesus either, until he spoke her name.

I wonder how often we are living our lives with Jesus alongside of us but fail to recognise that he is there. Perhaps the cloud of grief and sorrow prevents us from recognising him. Perhaps we are so weighed down with our circumstances that it distorts our perception of his presence and we fail to fully appreciate that he has been there all along.

To us, Jesus reveals his presence and assures us that he is with us always. I can imagine him coming alongside us, speaking our name, saying "I'm here. Don't let circumstances cloud your view of me. I never promised you an easy life, but I promised never to leave you or forsake you, no matter how difficult things get. Remember all the Bible passages you are reading, the sermons you have heard, the things you learnt in Sunday School. I did it not just for the world but for you! I break the bread of life to feed and sustain you. I will take care of you now and always."

Finally, another word about Molly, the disciple unnamed in this story. Perhaps that's you! You don't get recognition for what you do. You quietly and faithfully tread the path of discipleship and follow the path that God has given you, but your work isn't obvious to others. You don't get mentioned in Methodist Recorder or the church newsletter because what you do goes unnoticed. You may even be thinking that you have never done anything spectacular or noteworthy in your life. Here's a message for you. God knows who you are and recognises what you do. He speaks to you by name and says that you are loved every bit as much as the more prominent disciples, and your work is at least as important as theirs. I actually think that God has a special place in his heart for the quiet, faithful, unrecognised ones.

So the message for us all is that Jesus is with us. He will never leave us. He loves and values us and delights in us whether we are a Luke, a Mary Magdalene, a Cleopas... or a Molly!

### **Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession & Lord's Prayer**

Eternal God, through your Son you have given us assurance that we are never alone. You are with us now in all circumstances, in sorrow and joy, loss and gain, trial and ease, and you promise that we will be with you for ever in your eternal Kingdom. For this we give you our thanks and praise. Amen.

Loving God, we bring before you our needs and those of the world.

We pray for nations throughout the globe coping with covid 19, especially those with limited infrastructure and healthcare provision. Give grace to all those providing help to the suffering. We pray especially for people crowded together in places that are not their home, such as in prisons and refugee camps.

Lord, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

We pray for the UK, for our own Government and local authorities seeking ways forward at this time. We thank you for the NHS and all staff providing care in hospitals and care homes and ask you to give them strength, wisdom and protection. Help researchers who are seeking to develop treatments and vaccines to combat the virus. Be with all who work in health and social care in a community setting, enabling people to stay safe and well in their homes.

Lord, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

We pray for those known to us who are currently in hospital or resident in care homes, and ask that you give them healing and protection. Help those who are waiting for treatment that has been put on hold because of the pandemic. We remember also those who have passed from this life into your presence. We give thanks for their lives and ask for your grace to support the bereaved. We pray for all who find lockdown and isolation difficult, especially those who struggle with mental health and those whose domestic situation is challenging.

Lord, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

We pray for your Church worldwide. We ask for your grace for our local churches, our Circuit, District and Connexion, that together with our brothers and sisters worldwide in all denominations we may be faithful in proclaiming the message of hope and salvation that is ours through your Truth and Love. We ask that, although we are not able to physically meet together, you continue to give us imagination to find ways of maintaining community and fellowship.

Lord, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

Gracious Lord, accept these prayers, which we offer with faith and thanksgiving, in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen**

## **The Lord's Prayer**

### **Come Let Us With Our Lord Arise (STF 148)**

- 1) Come, let us with our Lord arise,  
Our Lord, who made both earth and skies:  
Who died to save the world he made,  
And rose triumphant from the dead;  
He rose, the Prince of life and peace,  
And stamped the day for ever his.
- 2) This is the day the Lord has made,  
That all may see his love displayed,  
May feel his resurrection's power,  
And rise again, to fall no more,  
In perfect righteousness renewed,  
And filled with all the life of God.
- 3) Then let us render him his own,  
With solemn prayer approach his throne,  
With meekness hear the gospel word,  
With thanks his dying love record,  
Our joyful hearts and voices raise,  
And fill his courts with songs of praise.

## **Blessing**