

Dear Friends

I hope you are all well, and perhaps found a fitting way to mark VE Day on Friday. Along with worship and a reflection for today, I'm attaching to this email the service and reflection that I posted on the facebook page on Friday. Today's Gospel reading and reflection can also be watched on YouTube, where the link is <https://youtu.be/9xUEYrTKXpE>



The Way, the Truth and the Life: A Reflection for the Fifth Sunday of Easter.

Revd John reads and reflects on the Gospel Reading for the Fifth Sunday of Easter: John 14.1-14.
[youtu.be](https://youtu.be/9xUEYrTKXpE)

Please remember in your prayers those who have died, including those whose funerals we'll be conducting in our group, namely:

Linda Kirby on 14 May at 1.30pm

Joan Collier on 22 May at 11am

Sadie Nelson on 27 May at 11.30am

This week, I shall be posting a letter and some prayer resources to those on our electoral rolls. This will include a booklet that the Church of England nationally has produced with Prayers for use during the corona virus outbreak. I am intending to send those out to all, including those of you who have email, but if you would prefer not to receive anything in the post please let me know, and I will send the same resources by email.

As ever, it is always good to hear your news; do get in touch any time. I'm pleased to say that all is well in the Vicarage, with Priscilla and Debbie coping very well with the shielding instructions.

I hope it will not be too long before we can meet again in person, but the priority of course must be to stay safe. We will wait to hear what the Prime Minister announces this evening, and I know the Bishops have been reflecting on how, in due course, churches may be open again, but it is clear that will be a gradual process. I will keep you updated as and when I know more.

With love and blessings

Worship for 5th Sunday of Easter

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Faithful one, whose word is life:
come with saving power
to free our praise,
inspire our prayer
and shape our lives
for the kingdom of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed for us.
Let us therefore rejoice by putting away all malice and evil
and confessing our sins with a sincere and pure heart.

**Lord our God,
in our sin we have avoided your call.
Our love for you is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that goes away early.
Have mercy on us;
deliver us from judgement;
bind up our wounds and revive us;
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

May the God of love
bring us back to himself,
forgive us our sins,
and assure us of his eternal love
in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Collect

Risen Christ,
your wounds declare your love for the world
and the wonder of your risen life:
give us compassion and courage
to risk ourselves for those we serve,
to the glory of God the Father.

Amen.

New Testament Reading: Acts 7.55-end

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Stephen gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 'Look', he said, 'I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!' But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he died.

Gospel Reading: John 14.1-14

Jesus said, 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.' Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know the Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.'

Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask for anything, I will do it.'

Reflection: Revd John

The first time I ever used a Sat Nav in my car was a little bit worrying. I never particularly wanted to get a Sat Nav but when I got a mobile phone with one already installed, and I was needing to take a funeral in a crematorium the other side of Birmingham, in an area I didn't know, I thought this was the time to give it a go. And mostly, it was pretty successful. There was the odd turning I missed, but the satnav soon readjusted the route, and I'd allowed myself plenty of time, so we got there. The disconcerting moment came as I drove through the cemetery gates and up the drive towards the crematorium chapel, and heard the voice from my phone: "You have now reached your destination."

Well, I thought. I can't argue with that. One way or another, our journey through life would seem to end here, at the cemetery or crematorium. But perhaps we'll return to that thought later. For now, back to the Sat Nav, which did its job of guiding me on that route. But in order for a Sat Nav to be any use, you need the address or postcode of where you want to go; without that information, it cannot possibly plot a route to your destination.

And so it may be we can have some sympathy with Thomas in today's Gospel Reading. Jesus has said to the disciples, 'You know the way to the place where I am going'; and Thomas responds, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?'

It seems a reasonable reply; but one of the things that emerges in this conversation between Jesus and Thomas, is that the disciples actually know more than they think. When Thomas professes not to know the way, Jesus tells him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him, and have seen him.'

Thomas knows Jesus; and to know Jesus is to know the way, because Jesus is the way. The way is not some information, a route plotted on a map; the way is a person.

We sometimes use the phrase, "It's not what you know, it's who you know". Usually, that's spoken as a complaint, if we've been passed over for promotion in favour of someone with less ability and fewer

qualifications but with more and better contacts. But in the Christian faith, the principle of “It’s not what you know, but who you know” comes into its own, and speaks an important truth.

There’s a lot that we don’t know, and probably a lot that we don’t understand. Right now, we face a troubled present and an uncertain future. Where are we going? What is the route? And, to borrow the classic question that children ask to annoy their parents on a long car journey, “Are we nearly there yet?” To all these questions, we have to admit: We just don’t know.

But it’s not what you know, it’s who you know. Thomas knows Jesus; and because he knows Jesus, he knows the way, because Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. Jesus is the one who is not just our companion on the road, and our guide, but he is the one who is the very beginning and ending of our journey, the one from whom our life has come and in whom our life rests securely.

Our reading began with the words of Jesus, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.” Knowing him, we can trust him and his promises, and although we may not be able to see the way ahead, we know the way, because Jesus is the way, now and forever.

Prayers of intercession

Heavenly Father, we thank you that we can come to you through Jesus, the living way. Help us to entrust our cares and concerns, our anxieties and our fears, to you, in the sure knowledge that you know us, you love us, and you hold us always in the palm of your hand. **Amen.**

Father, we pray for all those who have come to know your love in the face of Jesus Christ. May your Church throughout the world be strengthened in its worship and its witness. Though we cannot gather together, may we know your presence in the different rooms in which we pray. Bless the leaders of the Church, and especially our own bishops David and Anne, Archdeacons Simon and Jenny, and Louise our Area Dean, as they seek your wisdom and offer guidance as to the ways in which the work of the church may continue during this time. **Amen.**

Father, we pray for all those who show your love in works of service. Especially we pray for all who are on the frontline in maintaining the provision of services and care during the pandemic. We pray for all who work in healthcare and social welfare; in retail and distribution; for staff working in crematoria and funeral directors; for teachers and all who offer childcare. And we pray for those who are adjusting to working in new ways, and for those who are unable to work in the present situation. We pray for those whose work and businesses are under threat. Surround all people with your protection, and give to them your assurance and your blessing. **Amen.**

Father, we pray for our local communities; and especially this week we pray for all who live on Birch Close and Bodymoor Heath Road in Kingsbury; Beech Close in Hurley; Church Close in Wood End; and Birchley Heath Road in Merevale w. Bentley. We thank you for all who work to strengthen community life, and in this week when we have celebrated the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe, may we be given the resolve and fortitude to come together in facing every challenge before us. **Amen.**

Father, we hold before you all who are sick, whether at home, in hospitals, or care homes. Pour out your healing upon them. Where it is possible, restore them in health and strength; and where they are at the end of life, give them comfort, peace, and the knowledge of your love. **Amen.**

Father, we remember those who have died...
Help us to trust in the promise of Jesus,
that he has gone ahead to prepare a place for all your children in your presence.
In due time, turn our tears of grief into tears of joy. **Amen.**

Blessing

The God of peace,
who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,
that great shepherd of the sheep,
through the blood of the eternal covenant,
make you perfect in every good work to do his will,
working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight;
and the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
be with you all, now and always

Amen.

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