

Third Sunday of Easter – 26/04/2020

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Good morning everyone, and I hope you're all well, and perhaps getting some opportunity whilst keeping to the lockdown to enjoy the fine weather.

Once again, I'm sharing some material to help us with our prayers and reflections at home, but with a couple of differences this time. Most importantly, I'm delighted that Revd Carole is offering today's reflection, so thank you Carole. Secondly, I have been getting to grips with modern technology (always a challenge for me!) and have ventured into the world of video, so the worship and the reflection are now available either to watch and listen to through the youtube links below, but I am also attaching the text of both if you find it more helpful simply to read them quietly.

I'm also very grateful to Sarah, who (as though of you in the choir will know) has been sharing some wonderful youtube links to various hymns and music appropriate to each Sunday. She is happy for me to forward those emails to any one else who would like to worship in that way, or to add you to her mailing list. Just let me know, but as a taster I have included in the links below my favourite from the pieces Sarah found for last Sunday, a Taize piece, In Resurrectionem tuam, with singers and musicians from around the world.

As ever, do get in touch about anything, or just to chat; it's been great to hear from quite a few of you. It looks like we are in this for the long haul, so if you have any other ideas or recommendations of what you would find helpful as we do church in a different way in these circumstances please share it.

So the links to the videos follow, and then the text of the worship and Carole's reflection. Once again, I've also included those as Word attachments if you find that easier. Because the videos will be shared quite publicly, I have not included the names of individuals in the intercessions, but just left space for us to name those we know and are thinking of. But once again, I will give here the names of those for whom I will be taking funerals over the coming days, and I know we continue to hold in our hearts all those who have passed away recently, and who I am sure we will remember more publicly when we can meet again. It has meant a lot, to myself and the families, to know that even when only a few can be present at a funeral, others are joining in thoughts and prayers at home at the same time. So please remember Tony Cox, from Wood End (Friday 1 May at 3pm) and Joan Collier from Bracebridge Court and Kingsbury (Friday 22 May at 11am).

A few people have asked me if it is okay to share these emails with friends perhaps from other churches who might find the prayers and reflections helpful. The answer is yes; I am very conscious at this time of our neighbouring parishes who are without any clergy, and I am happy if we can help in any way.

With love and blessings

John

Link for today's worship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YD2uz789eG4&feature=youtu.be>



Worship for the Third Sunday of Easter

A simple act of worship at home from the Kingsbury and Baxterley group of Church for the 3rd Sunday of Easter.

www.youtube.com

Link for today's reflection

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOe9egLe18U&feature=youtu.be>



The Emmaus Road: Reflection for the Third Sunday of Easter - YouTube

Revd Carole reads and reflects on the Gospel Reading, Luke 24.13-35 - the story of a meeting with the risen Jesus on the Emmaus Road.

www.youtube.com

Link for the Taize piece <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-hybuhxJg8>

Worship for 3rd Sunday of Easter

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Almighty God,
your Son has opened for us
a new and living way into your presence.
Give us new hearts and constant wills
to worship you in spirit and in truth
through 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.

Like Mary at the empty tomb,
we fail to grasp the wonder of your presence.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Like the disciples behind locked doors,
we are afraid to be seen as your followers.
Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

Like Thomas in the upper room,
we are slow to believe.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

May the Father of all mercies
cleanse us from our sins,
and restore us in his image
to the praise and glory of his name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Collect

Risen Christ,
you filled your disciples with boldness and fresh hope
strengthen us to proclaim your risen life,
and fill us with your peace,
to the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

Gospel Reading Luke 24. 13-35

The Walk to Emmaus

13 Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14 and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, 16 but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. 17 And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still,

looking sad. 18 Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' 19 He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 21 But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. 22 Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 23 and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. 24 Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.' 25 Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! 26 Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' 27 Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

28 As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. 29 But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. 30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. 32 They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' 33 That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. 34 They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' 35 Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Reflection

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

I don't know about you, but for me it is hard to believe that this year Easter did happen. We are two weeks into the Easter Season, and yet it feels like Easter was missing. It did happen, of course it did. Alleluia! He is risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia! But there is a niggle. It didn't feel like Easter. No Services in church, no First Communion of Easter on Holy Saturday, no vigil, no renewal of vows at the Cathedral for all clergy on Maundy Thursday (though we did do this online) – I know I am doing a backward chronological order! It just feels like so much was missing – above all being able to share worship and communion with our church family. Yes, we shared some reflections online and by email, but it's just not the same.

Yet Jesus Christ is risen, the same as every Easter - before this one. And for those who believe in the risen Jesus Christ, it will go down in history as the weirdest Easter, ever. It has though given us a better opportunity to reflect perhaps differently, in the light of the situations we find ourselves in. Some 'shielding' themselves or others in their

household, but thankfully have not been ill; those who are self-isolating and thankfully haven't been ill, to protect themselves and others in their household and the wider community; those who are abiding by social-distancing rules to keep themselves and others safe; those who are furloughed to protect businesses (and it is really hard to focus on working from home when it was not previously a part of everyday life). Then there are those who have been ill (but are not sure if the illness was Covid-19 or not because they weren't ill enough to need a hospital; and those who have been ill enough to be hospitalised; and those who have died and those who grieve those who have died. There is much to lament, but in lament there is a way forward. A way of viewing situations with new eyes.

And so it was for the couple of characters on the road to Emmaus. Cleopas and his companion were lamenting the events of the last seven days, when a stranger joined them on their journey. He doesn't seem to know what events they are referring to, so they go over the story again – still unable to make any sense of it, nor knowing what it will mean for their future.

Substitute 4 weeks for the 7 days, (actually since January as we have watched the progress of Covid-19). We also lament the world situation because of a virus we can't get a handle on, but which has caused our world to be turned upside-down. Nor can we make any sense of it, nor have any real idea how we will be affected by it when the world and our every day lives return to a form of 'normal', if at all.

The stranger explains why all the events of that first Easter had to happen in the way they did; he explained the Scriptures, everything that had been said by the prophets. Cleopas and companion listened, but still didn't know who the stranger was – just that he seemed to be an inspiring teacher.

We have probably listened to some if not all of the daily updates from Number 10. There seems to be a lot of advice from 'experts' as to how the government should handle the situation, and the daily updates reflect the advice given and received. I am a little sceptical about some of the government decisions based on that advice. I guess time will tell, but at the moment I am not truly inspired by what I hear, there are still many questions to be asked. You may think differently. What I do know is that the experts, and government ministers are human and doing the best they can with a set of circumstances they have not encountered before. No other previous pandemic can compare, even though some try to do so.

If only we could properly get together to discuss, as Cleopas and companion did in inviting the stranger to stay with them for the night. The conversation could continue over a shared meal, and it is over this shared meal that the stranger is revealed as the risen Christ. The eyes of the companions are opened to the truth – and Jesus disappears from their sight (but not from being with them). At this point they are no longer sad, but full of excitement for all they have heard and seen, so are keen to rush straight back to the disciples to tell all. The roughly 7-mile return walk to Jerusalem in the late evening does not put them off – telling the good news cannot wait until morning!

I think this is the point where I cannot wait to get outside and make it known that Jesus Christ is risen indeed, and that he is still with us through all of these turbulent and very unsettling times. I cannot wait for us to share the bread and wine again, so our eyes can be opened to truth and the hope that lies therein for us all.

I'll have to wait of course, as with everyone else, until lock-down is over. But it will come to an end and we will be together again. In the meantime – in the words of today's Collect: Almighty Father, give us such knowledge of Jesus' presence with us, that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life. Amen.

Prayers of intercession

Risen Lord Jesus,
you met with your disciples outdoors, on the road,
and indoors, in a private room;
meet with us wherever we may be.
You met with your disciples in the opening of the scriptures and in the breaking of bread;
meet with us also through your word,
and although we cannot meet to break bread together,
sustain us in our fellowship with one another and with you,
and fill us with your grace.
Lord, in your mercy:
hear our prayer.

Risen Lord Jesus,
look in mercy upon the world that you have made,
in all its beauty and all its hurt.
Bring healing to creation,
and healing to humanity in this time of pandemic.
Help us to embrace sustainable ways of living;
and where in this time we have become more thankful for small things,
help us never to go back to taking those things for granted.
Lord, in your mercy:
hear our prayer.

Risen Lord Jesus,
we give you thanks for the communities of which we are a part,
and as we pray for our parishes we pray this week especially for all who live or work in Barlow Court and Beech Close in Kingsbury, on Atherstone Lane in Hurley, on Boulters Lane in Wood End, and on Twenty One Oaks in Bentley. We pray especially for the residents and staff of Bentley House Care Centre; keep them safe, and keep them well, in body, mind and spirit.

Lord, in your mercy:
hear our prayer.

Risen Lord Jesus,
we pray for all who are sick and in need of healing;
in a moment of silence we bring before you those who are particularly on our hearts and
minds;

pour out your grace upon them, ease their pain, assure them of your love, and bring
them to the wholeness of life that is your will.

Lord, in your mercy:
hear our prayer.

Risen Lord Jesus,
who died upon the cross and was raised to life in triumph;
we hold before you all who have died recently,
naming in the silence those known to us...
Surround with your comfort and compassion all those who mourn;
and give to us all the hope and joy that your resurrection brings.

Risen Lord Jesus,
**hear our prayer,
and make us one in heart and mind
to serve you with joy for ever.
Amen.**

Thanksgiving

We give you thanks and praise for the gospel we have received.

Christ died for our sins. Alleluia!

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Death comes to all through Adam,
and sin reigns for a time.

New life without end comes through Christ,
and he reigns for ever. Alleluia!

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Death, where is your victory?

Death, where is your sting?

Death is swallowed up in victory,
the victory you give us in Christ. Alleluia!

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

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.

Revd Dr John White

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