

Our Sunday Service Together

April 23rd 2023

Easter 3

An Easter Acclamation

Praise be to God in the highest. It is our duty and our joy, always and everywhere to give you thanks, almighty and eternal Father, and especially in these days of Easter to celebrate with joyful hearts the memory of your wonderful works.

For by the mystery of his passion Jesus Christ, your risen Son, has conquered the powers of death and hell and restored in men and women the image of your glory. He has placed them once more in paradise and opened to them the gate of life eternal.

And so earth and heaven resound with gladness, while angels and archangels and the powers of all creation sing for ever the hymn of your glory.

Preparation

All: This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Through the brokenness of Christ, we become one body
as one body we now gather in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to receive God's holy word, to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Our Confession

Let us come to the light of Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

All: Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord, we come to you in sorrow for our sins, and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength, and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes, as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone, and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

Be still for a moment in confession and in receiving God's Grace in Christ

All: May Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive us our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Risen Lord. **Amen.**

The opening prayer

All: The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

All: As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and for ever. Amen.

The Psalmody Psalm 116.1-4 and 12-19 *We say the psalm aloud*

I love the Lord, for he has heard the voice of my supplication;
because he inclined his ear to me on the day I called to him.
The snares of death encompassed me; the pains of hell took hold of me;
by grief and sorrow was I held.
Then I called upon the name of the Lord: 'O Lord, I beg you, deliver my soul.'
Gracious is the Lord and righteous; our God is full of compassion.

I will fulfil my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people.
Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants.
O Lord, I am your servant, your servant, the child of your handmaid;
you have freed me from my bonds.
I will offer to you a sacrifice of thanksgiving and call upon the name of the Lord.
I will fulfil my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people,
In the courts of the house of the Lord, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

Scripture Reading Acts 2.14a and 36-41

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them:
Therefore, let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and
Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.'

³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles,
'Brothers, what should we do?' ³⁸ Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of
Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise
is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.' ⁴⁰ And
he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt
generation.' ⁴¹ So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand
persons were added.

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Gloria

All: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Gospel Luke 24.13-35

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, 'Arrgh, how dumb 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.

at the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

A Reflection for the day

Our usual English translation of the passage from Luke is kinder to the two men on the road to Emmaus than the original Greek. In the original, Jesus really does call them 'dumb', 'slow to realise', and he does get very frustrated and exasperated with them.

Why were they still so slow to see and understand? What was it they had been slow to see and that took Jesus time to explain through all the scripture? Why was it that they did not see who was walking with them?

Many people have tried to say grief blinded the men, like Mary earlier that morning in the garden by the tomb, their eyes were so filled with tears they could not make out it was Jesus. Some have suggested that Jesus is so changed in his new resurrected form that they would not be able to see without some divine blessings. However, the text does suggest their ability to recognize Jesus walking with them was through grief. Certainly none of the resurrection appearances show Jesus being anything other in looks than who they took from the cross. But still they could not recognize him; why?

It is interesting how the men talk of having been filled with hope that Jesus was the Messiah, that he would redeem Israel and be the fulfilment of what had been promised to King David; God's Messiah would sit upon the throne of Israel forever ruling with righteousness and justice. But Jesus had been crucified rather than placed on the throne. Israel was still under Roman rule and corrupt Herod was still in charge. The men, and all the disciples had simply been shown to be another in the long line of failed messiah followers over the decades. After all no true Messiah would be crucified – that is an oxymoron!

Peter, in his words from the beginning of Acts calls upon the people of Israel stood before him to repent and be baptised. Repentance, we know, means to turnabout and live the way of God in Christ. To turn around and see a different way for living. Jesus' exasperation with the men on the road is because they had been looking the wrong way, looking for the wrong type of Messiah.

They had hoped for a victory over Israel's enemies and a king placed on the throne after the heart of David. How dumb they had been - looking for this Messiah. It is no surprise they could not see who was before them because they were looking for someone completely different. Here was God's Messiah, crucified yes as the way God would defeat the enemies of Israel, the enemies of all humanity for that matter – those of rebellion and sin against God and death the consequence of sin. Here was God's Messiah, proven so by the resurrection; but they cannot see him, because they have been looking the wrong way.

Repent, says Peter, receive the forgiveness of God offered in Jesus and from now on live a new life, walk a new way. Be baptised and so die with Christ and be raised in His Spirit, the sign and seal of your redemption, and walk into a new life through the power of His resurrection. Hearing, seeing and realising this it is no surprise that the men's hearts began to feel on fire, and they ran to tell everyone else.

How on fire are our hearts today?

The Creed

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Prayers

We make our intercessions

O God of peace, who has taught us that in quietness and confidence shall be our strength; help us, as we come into your presence, to be still and know that you are God.

As we continue this season of Easter let us pray for that our faith will grow and develop.

Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Strengthen and guide our Bishops, Michael and Ruth and all laity and clergy who seek to serve you in this diocese. May they be filled with the Spirit and speak with authority.

Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We Pray for Our King as his coronation approaches, his Prime Minister and counsellors, and all World leaders, that they may have the Spirit of wisdom to lead us in compassion and to a just world.

Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for our families, friends, and neighbours that we may serve Christ in one another and seek the common good.

Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for the sick, suffering and dying and we give thanks and pray for those who use their skill and risk their lives to care for them.

Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Hear us as we remember those who have died..... According to your promises grant them a share in your eternal kingdom.

Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Rejoicing in the fellowship of all your saints, we commend ourselves and the whole creation to your unfailing love. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and for evermore. Amen.

The Collect

All: Almighty Father, who in your great mercy gladdened the disciples with the sight of the risen Lord: give us such knowledge of his presence with us, that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life and serve you continually in righteousness and truth; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

All: 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.
And 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 Conclusion

All: Christ, as a light illumine and guide me this day.
Christ, as a shield overshadow me.
Christ under me, Christ over me; Christ beside me on my left and my right.
This day be within and without me. Amen.