

# Sunday Reflections

## Easter 2 April 7<sup>th</sup> 2024



### 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 Psalm Psalm 133 *We say the psalm aloud*

Behold how good and pleasant it is to dwell together in unity.  
It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down upon the beard,  
Even on Aaron's beard, running down upon the collar of his clothing.  
It is like the dew of Hermon running down upon the hills of Zion.  
For there the Lord has promised his blessing: even life for evermore.  
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 4.32-35

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. <sup>33</sup>With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. <sup>34</sup>There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. <sup>35</sup>They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. <sup>36</sup>There was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas (which means 'son of encouragement'). <sup>37</sup>He sold a field that belonged to him, then brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

*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 John 20.19-31

<sup>19</sup>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.' <sup>20</sup>After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' <sup>22</sup>When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup>If you forgive the sins of

any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

<sup>24</sup> But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> 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.'

<sup>26</sup> 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.' <sup>27</sup> 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.' <sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' <sup>29</sup> 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.'

<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. <sup>31</sup> 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.

*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

'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.'

At the beginning of his ministry Jesus sat in the temple and read aloud the words of Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." This is his manifesto – to bring the Kingdom of God through serving the poor, the oppressed, and to see those held captive in lives lived less than God intended human life to be.

The Father sent the Son out of love for the world, John tells us. So Jesus sends us, from the same basis of love for the world – to the poor, the oppressed, the blind, those held captive through injustice, to make real the year of the Lord's favour; the Jubilee of the Lord.

This Jubilee was supposed to come every 50 years in Israel, a time for debts to be cancelled, for land let out to be returned to the land owner. It was a time when poverty would be addressed and yokes of oppression removed. Those in servitude, those held captive through economic circumstances were set free. This was the Shalom of God, the 'peace' of God that Jesus declares. It is not so much a quiet time, as the rich and fruitful human living God intended and brought to being now in Christ. The debts have been paid and those held captive are free to enter into this new living.

This peace, this Shalom, this kingdom rule of God made possible in Christ, the early church perceived very quickly and stepped out in faith to make a reality. Barnabas and the others who took steps to meet the needs of the poor through the resources they had did not simply enact 'Jubilee' they made it a permanent reality. They saw that in Christ the sacrificial system of the temple was now redundant, and the Torah – the law fulfilled, so the need to retain the land is negated; rather than lease land it can be sold for good! There is a new covenant, a new way, a kingdom made possible. Christ's role was to make the 'way', the disciples now were able to be followers of the 'way'. No longer was there a need for proclamation of love, they could demonstrate that love through action.

Thomas embodied the doubts we all face when called to go in God's love, to be sent by Jesus in the same manner he was sent by the Father. Jesus met Thomas's doubts with grace as well as the reminder that it is through belief we come to see the kingdom. Waiting sceptically to see the kingdom before having faith will leave you bound and waiting a long time. Thomas responded, we know went in faith, led by the Spirit, sent by Jesus to bring the love of God in action and word.

I wonder, are we ready to perceive, as the early church did, the Kingdom come in Christ, and then to resource its full presence amongst those in need of God's love, to see captives released, the oppressed set free, the blind given sight and the peace, 'the Shalom of God' become a reality 'here on earth as it is in heaven'.

## 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 that our faith will grow and develop.  
*Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.*

We pray for Bishop Michael 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.*

As we remember St Thomas, we pray for all those who have doubts about their faith that they may have the courage to ask the difficult questions and find adequate answers. *Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.*

We Pray for the King, the Prime Minister, and all World leaders, that they may have the Spirit of wisdom to lead us in peace and justice. *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, dying and those who mourn ..... and we give thanks and pray for those who care for them. *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. *Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son our saviour Jesus Christ, Amen*

## The Collect

All: Almighty Father, you have given your only Son to die for our sins and to rise again for our justification: grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness that we may always serve you in pureness of living and truth; through the merits of your Son Jesus Christ 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.