

# Our Sunday Reflections

April 14<sup>th</sup> 2024

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 4 *We say the psalm aloud*

Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness;  
you set me at liberty when I was in trouble; have mercy on me and hear my prayer.  
How long will you nobles dishonour my glory;  
how long will you love vain things and seek after falsehood?  
But know that the Lord has shown me his marvellous kindness;  
when I call upon the Lord, he will hear me.  
Stand in awe, and sin not; commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.  
Offer the sacrifices of righteousness and put your trust in the Lord.  
There are many that say, 'Who will show us any good?'  
Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us.  
You have put gladness in my heart, more than when their corn and wine and oil increase.  
In peace I will lie down and sleep, for it is you Lord, only, who make me dwell in safety.  
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now,  
and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

## Scripture Reading Acts 3.12-19

When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, 'You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? <sup>13</sup> The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. <sup>14</sup> But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, <sup>15</sup> and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. <sup>16</sup> And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.

<sup>17</sup> 'And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. <sup>18</sup> In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. <sup>19</sup> Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out,

*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 24.36b-48

Jesus came and stood amongst the disciples and said 'Peace be with you.' <sup>37</sup> They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. <sup>38</sup> He said to them, 'Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? <sup>39</sup> Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.' <sup>40</sup> And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. <sup>41</sup> While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' <sup>42</sup> They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup> and he took it and ate in their presence. <sup>44</sup> Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' <sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, <sup>46</sup> and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup> and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'

*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

Following the events of the first Easter/Passover we here the apostles, like Peter declaring 'we are witnesses to all that God has done in, and through Jesus Christ'.

I suspect we think they are talking of the resurrection alone; after all it is at the forefront of everything after Easter. I suspect also we might struggle with that concept, with what that word really means, with the how and the why – although the apostles seem to have no problem with the 'how' – God did this is good enough for them (God does the inexplicable, many signs and wonders).

Over the three years these folks spent with Jesus they had seen many things – many signs and wonders. They have seen the hungry fed, the have justice for the marginalized acted upon, not simply talked about. They have also seen the comatose, the looking but not dead healed and given life again – Peter's own mother is an example of that.

They have seen the very dead, the 'don't open that tomb it will stink dead' revived by God – this was what happened with Lazarus.

The disciples knew what death was, what healing was, what reviving life is, and they have been witnesses to all of it, and to the work of God.

As they took Jesus from the cross to the tomb and rolled the stone over they knew he was dead, very dead indeed- they were witnesses to that. And now, they were witnesses to something altogether different, something they had not seen before and as such had no expectation of – Resurrection!

Luke tells us of their surprise, how they were frightened when Jesus turned up and thought the only explanation was that he must be a ghost; a 'spirit being' – but there was no body for the 'being' to have come out of. How can they explain things, what words to use?

Jesus understands all of this and invites them simply to look and see and to examine him. Interestingly the word used for touch here is not that of a light tentative touch, but an invitation to come and take a firm hold of Jesus, to feel the bones, to touch his skin, to eat with him.

I am also sure the disciples were in awe and wonder and what God had done, for only God could do such a thing. I am sure also they searched for the words to describe what they knew was a new reality in the world, life beyond the power of death – Resurrection!

And thus Peter stands before the people and says, 'why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk?' Yes, you had Jesus crucified and the Romans did a good job; dead for sure! But God has done something altogether better; resurrection. And if there is resurrection then there is salvation from sin because death is triumphed over.

Peter finishes with a simple line for all people of every age, 'Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out'.

## 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 Bishop 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, the Prime Minister, 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.