

Earlsdon Methodist Church
3RD Sunday of Easter Worship
18th April 2021



Jesus says, 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.' In worship, let us come to the one who offers peace and rest. **Amen**

Hymn 293 StF: All Heavens Declares



Prayer of Adoration

Lord, who understands our every need, we adore you for stilling our turmoil, for being the calm in the storm, our anchor in the deep, and the safe port awaiting us always. **Amen.**

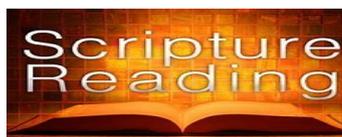
Prayer of Confession

Most Merciful God, we confess that when distress comes knocking at our door, all that we have learned and should know goes flying out of the window. Our minds in disarray, we fail to turn to trusted sources of help. Forgive us for forgetting how to seek you. We forget your sustaining Word in Scripture, your presence when we turn to you in prayer, the calm that is to be found when we seek you in community.

We are sorry for turning in on ourselves, our minds going round in circles. Come, risen Lord, break the cycle of our despair. **Amen.**

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Lord God, light of light eternal. Thank you for bringing the light of life and hope into our darkness. We cannot live without you, the light of life. We cannot see where we are going without you, our guiding light. We cannot understand clearly without your enlightening Spirit. Thank you for our risen Lord Jesus, star of the morning, dayspring, sun of righteousness, light of the world, to carry the cross for all who are weary and lost. **Amen.**



Acts 3: 12-19 and Luke 24: 36b-48

Reflection

The two disciples have returned to Jerusalem after their walk to Emmaus and back. Their conversation with Jesus on the Emmaus road has brought some comfort but may have raised yet more questions. Their layer of emotions includes shock and grief at Jesus' death and confusion and disbelief at the disappearance of his body.

It is comforting to see that the first word Jesus uttered when he appeared to the disciples was 'PEACE'. Jesus blessed them with a greeting saying '*peace be with you*'. Although the disciples were '*startled and terrified and thought they had seen a ghost*'. Jesus comforted them in their distress and commanded their hearts to awaken to receive the enormity of the fulfilment of the scriptures - albeit as overwhelming as they may find it.

Jesus Christ did not keep his disciples guessing or left them in doubt, rather, Jesus showed them his hands and feet and invited them to touch him. Firstly, Jesus' fresh scar on his hands and feet were physical evidence of He or was hung on the cross. Secondly, this was a spiritual evidence - touching Jesus' body and seeing it is with form.

It was therefore necessary that Jesus Christ the Son of the Living God experienced pain, suffering, death and be resurrected. Jesus rose in his human form and it is that form which will resurrect. This is Christ's salvific grace - resurrection equals salvation - in accordance with the scriptures.

Question: What did Jesus do again to prove he is indeed fully human and not a ghost?

Jesus requested food from his disciples saying - "have you anything here to eat"? (**vs 41**) He was given a piece of broiled fish and he took it and ate in their presence. However, as Jesus eats with them, their feelings gave way to an expression of pure joy as they were satisfied that Jesus has risen indeed and they have seen the Lord. Jesus called their attention to the prophetic declarations about his birth, ministry, death and resurrection as was written in the Law of Moses, the Psalms and prophets ahead of his birth. For Jesus Christ, it was important that the disciples understood that what they were experiencing was not a situation of weakness and brokenness but one of divine empowerment and total victory for the world. This way, Jesus opened their minds to fully understand the scriptures and how it is to be fulfilled.

Nevertheless, the disciples acted in a way that any true friend, spouse, lover or God loving person would when dealing with grief about a loved one passing. They have listened to and read the scriptures and prophecies about the coming Messiah and his imminent death and resurrection, but nothing prepared them for the deep sense of loss and trauma when it eventually happened.

Question: What would help our minds to be open - when we are distressed - to know the peace of Christ, and to trust in his word?

Knowing that the disciples experienced times of anxiety in their journey of faith can be encouraging to us, and offers an opportunity to explore how we respond, emotionally, in different situations. Jesus Christ has laid a sure foundation for us - as it was written in the scriptures that 'the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day'. This is a sure hope in Christ that we need - to know that we too will rise with Christ on that day; that death has no hold over us and so when we do mourn, we do so with hope in Christ to dwell in the presence of our heavenly Father.

The Joy and Victory of Easter

Jesus Christ declared that 'on the third day of the resurrection, repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in His name to all nations starting from Jerusalem'. Our experience has been to observe Holy Week by reflecting on Lenten liturgies and meditations, others may have fasted for the forty days and on Easter Sunday, rejoice about the victory of the cross.

Beloved, this Easter season bears more relevance to this message as we are still experiencing challenges of the pandemic, shooting of unarmed black men and boys in the United States of America, a young woman kidnapped and killed in the United Kingdom, racial injustice, war and killing in Myanmar, Ireland, Ethiopia and other nations.

The Church has a prophetic mandate to proclaim repentance and forgiveness in Jesus' name so that 'the peace that passes all understanding' will rest upon the hearts and minds of all people in all circumstances for a new normal.

In **Acts 3:12-19**, Peter demonstrated how the power of the Holy Spirit in them equipped them to heal the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. Peter addressed the Israelites who were filled with wonder and amazement at what they have just witnessed that they have not done that by their own power or piety but by faith in Christ's name alone has made the man to be strong and be given a perfect health.

Finally, Jesus acknowledges that we cannot do this with our own strength and as he empowered his disciples with the gift of God, which is God's Holy Spirit, so we are today empowered by God's Holy Spirit to be intercessors for our communities, families, the Church and the nations of the world. We have been called to prayerfully facilitating, repentance, peace and forgiveness amongst all people so that God's kingdom will come here on earth. An Easter victory for an Easter people! **Amen.**

Hymn 264 StF: Make Way, Make Way, for Christ the King



Lord God who has called us to faith, in faith we pray for the needs of others.
For the world and its people,
Lord, we pray.

Today, we pray for our Queen, in her loss and her grief may she find comfort and strength in her faith in God and life eternal. For all the Royal family in their grief, taking up new responsibilities with new purpose.
For the world and its people,
Lord, we pray.

We pray for those whose mental health causes them pain, anguish, confusion and loneliness, for those who feel abandoned, unwanted, unloved and un-helped.

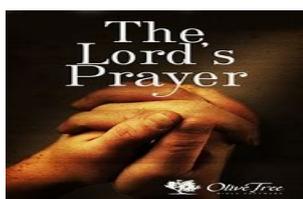
For those caring for loved ones that they too may know God's love and the love of others surrounding them.

For the world and its people,
Lord, we pray.

For countries at war - for Myanmar, Ethiopia, Mozambique and closer to home for the people of Ireland and Northern Ireland, for Catholics and Protestants, those of faith and those of none.
For the world and its people,
Lord, we pray.

For us, we pray that our ears may be used to hear the cries of the needy, that our eyes be used to see the needs around us, that our voices be used to speak up for the marginalised and the poor, that our hands be used to reach out in comfort and that our lives be used to improve the lives of others.

For the world and its people,
Lord, we pray. Amen



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.**

Hymn 313 StF: To Thine be the Glory



Jesus said to his disciples, 'Peace be with you.' Jesus opened their minds – they became his witnesses. So, Lord, may we too find peace in your service, with opened minds and hearts discerning your Spirit so that we may serve others in your name.
Amen.

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