

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use at home as we are unable to enter the church buildings of St Mary's & St Peter's. But we are still Church!

As a friend said to me this week "whilst we are fasting on the sacrament, let us feast on the word"

Asking God that we are well enough, let us spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with us.

We pray;

Together we are making a spiritual communion

In union, O Lord with the faithful at every altar of your Church

I desire to offer you praise and thanksgiving.

I present to you my soul and body with the wish
that they may always be united to you.

And since I cannot now receive you in this sacrament,

I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.

I unite myself to you, and embrace you with all the affections of my soul.

Let nothing ever separate you from me.

May I live and die in your love.

Amen.

Sunday 19th April 1st Sunday after Easter

Opening Prayer

In places of darkness and in the fullness of light

Christ is risen

In times of doubt and in strength of faith

Christ is risen

In our pain and in our joy

Christ is risen

The Lord is risen

He is risen indeed! Hallelujah

Hymn: Be Still

Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One, is here;

Come bow before him now with reverence and fear:

In him no sin is found - we stand on holy ground.

Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One, is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around;

He burns with holy fire, with splendour he is crowned:

How awesome is the sight - our radiant King of light!

Be still, for the glory of the Lord is shining all around.

Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place;

He comes to cleanse and heal, to minister his grace -

No work too hard for him. In faith receive from him.

Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place.

Let us pray together

In the chaos before anything was, Lord, you spoke bringing life in abundance.

We praise and adore you, God of life

In the darkness of an early morning garden and the dank coldness of death and the tomb, Lord, you spoke bringing resurrection, defeating death and giving us abundant life

We praise and adore you, God of Life

In the dark places of our lives, Lord, you speak and bring recreation transformation and calling us to life in abundance

We praise and adore you, God of Life

God of abundant life,
you have called us to be your people and to walk in your way but there are times when we wander away, when we close our ears to your call and our eyes to your life. We remember those times before you.

Take all we have been and done and all we have left undone and transform it through your love and grace.

Open our ears to your words of forgiveness and our eyes to your glory.

May we hear the words

“Your sins are forgiven”

and know their truth.

Amen

Today’s Reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Peter Addresses the Crowd

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.

“Fellow Israelites listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him:

“I saw the Lord always before me.

Because he is at my right hand,

I will not be shaken.

Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;

my body also will rest in hope,

because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,

you will not let your holy one see decay.

You have made known to me the paths of life;

you will fill me with joy in your presence.^[b]

"Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰ But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne.³¹ Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. ³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it

Today's Gospel Reading: John 20: 19-31

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

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.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

Jesus and Thomas

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 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.'

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.' 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.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' 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.'

The Purpose of This Book

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. 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

A sermon written by Reader Geoff Clinton and presented by Rev Paul from Readings Acts 2. 14a 22-32 & John 20. 19-end

(Geoff was due to be preaching this Sunday before our current restrictions began, so it seemed too good to miss. Sadly, as Geoff is not on the net, you will have to put up with my dulcet tones rather than Geoff's milk and honey delivery)

Lord take these words and speak through them

Take our minds and think through them

Take our hearts and set them on fire with love for you now and always Amen

In the House Group that meets at Ian's on every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month we were listening earlier in the year to a series of talks given by David Pawson on the subject of discipleship. David Pawson, now in his 90's, some of you may remember as he was one of several highly gifted and respected preachers of the latter half of the last century who contributed so much to our understanding of biblical truth and its application to the Christian life. His teaching was then, and still is, quite outstanding.

In one of the talks we heard in the House Group David Pawson discussed the word "Christian" as given to describe people who believe in God and he said, rather surprisingly, that he didn't like the word or use it himself, because, he said, the word "Christian" has come to be regarded as a title which includes everyone who considers that he or she has some allegiance, however small, to God and so it includes even those who never go to church and never really give God a second thought, but it asked when filling in a form for example, "What is your religion"? would answer "C of E" or similar. But he said, sadly these people aren't really Christians at all; to them it's just a description of a very vague belief which doesn't in any way affect their way of life. True Christians, he said, are those who are devoted followers of Christ or in other words, they are disciples of Christ and 'disciple' is the word David Pawson said he preferred to use to describe them. Another word he said he was happy to use is 'apprentice' and 'apprentices' of course are those learning a trade or business and in that context an apprentice of Christ is someone learning the business of life with Christ.

As disciples or apprentices of Christ that is something we should always be doing - learning, understanding, moving our faith ever forward; and no matter how old some of us are, no matter how long we may have been Christ's disciples, no matter how far we may think we have come in our journey of faith to date, we all still have some way to go until we are finally changed into the likeness of Christ, so the learning process needs to go on and I guess, we never end for any of us this side of heaven.

But notwithstanding that, these does come a time in the life of every disciple, in the career of every apprentice, when the learning process is sufficiently advanced for him or her to stand on their own feet and face the challenges of the job, or the challenge of the world, alone. With it comes the need to assume some authority and responsibility and to apply what they have learnt so far to whatever confronts them.

We learn from the two readings for to-day. That that point was reached for the remaining 11 disciples when Jesus, following his resurrection, was finally taken from them into heaven. From that point on they knew that the time had come for them to assume authority and responsibility and to continue the works that Jesus had begun. They now knew it was down to them.

But what an amazing change took place in them to enable them to do that. No longer are they green apprentices or hesitant novices so frequently saying the wrong things or failing to quite grasp what they were being taught. No longer are they a scattered, dispirited, fearful group of individuals as they were after Jesus's arrest and crucifixion. Now they were united as one, and afraid no longer; afraid of no one even though they knew that what they were about to do and to preach carried with it the real threat of arrest and death as Jesus himself had suffered only a matter of days before.

So what brought about this huge difference in them, this determination to continue what Jesus had begun and to do what Jesus had been doing? Perhaps the answer to that lies in a combination of factors, one of them being the realization that this is what Jesus had been preparing them for and if His life's work was not to be wasted then it was down to them to continue it. There was no one else.

Then the gift of the Holy Spirit that they had only just received in a quite amazing experience would have done much to strengthen them and empower them, but strangely, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit now with them doesn't feature very highly in Peter's address to the crowd that we heard in the 1st lesson. The Holy Spirit hardly gets a mention there.

But what does stand out from what Peter said, and which he clearly said with great emphasis, was that disciples now knew, and they knew because they had seen Him, that Jesus had risen from the dead. He was alive! Peter's words:-

**"GOD HAS RAISED THIS JESUS TO LIFE, AND WE ARE ALL WITNESSES TO THE FACT"
(Acts 2:32)**

The disciples had first-hand knowledge of this incredible work that God had done and which brought a new dimension to life for them and for all who believe. This was God reaching down into this world in a way which would have been beyond belief if they had not witnessed it with their own eyes. This was a miracle beyond any other of the many miracles they had seen in their time. This was proof beyond doubt to them that what Jesus had taught them was true: that this world is not the end; that there is another kingdom; that there is life after death.

This was now something to give their life to, and to die for if necessary. This was what changed them from notices, or apprentices into powerful, spirit-filled disciples proclaiming what they knew to be true to the world.

And what is more they wanted the world to know what they knew to be true, to know the evidence of the Risen Lord, so that the world too could believe as they did. As John writes in v 31 of chapter 20 of his gospel, which we heard in our second lesson:

**"These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is Christ,
the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name".**

And they wanted us to know particularly, their personal evidence of Jesus's appearances after his resurrection. They were convinced and they wanted us to be convinced, and what more convincing evidence could there be than that which we heard in our second lesson from the disciple Thomas? He was honest. He couldn't believe that this miracle could have happened, that Jesus could possibly be alive. He would only believe if he not only saw but touched the evidence. He saw, and he touched, and he believed.

The disciples believed. Do we believe? They are our witnesses. Do we accept their evidence? Do we believe, as they did, that Jesus is alive, that this world is not the end, that there is another kingdom, and that there is life after death? If we do believe, if we do accept their evidence, then perhaps it's time for us, if we haven't already, to move from being humble novices or apprentices of the faith we profess and instead proclaim it with conviction to the world.

Hymn: Song of Love

Song of love and my surrender
How I gave my life to him
And the joy from knowing Jesus
Nothing else could ever bring

I will sing of my redemption
And the love I don't deserve
How I found my precious savior
When the voice of God I heard

Song of hope to give my future
Solid ground on which to build
And my soul will live forever
Love divine and hope fulfilled

May his goodness be my shelter
May his wisdom be my guide
And the scars will still remind me
How my friend has saved my life

Song of freedom made eternal
And a peace forever mine
Through the cross
And resurrection
Death defeated He's alive

Alleluia what a saviour
Alleluia king of Kings
He is risen I'm forgiven
Precious love my soul to win

Time to Reflect

Take a time to sit quietly

Let Us Pray

Into the closed doors of this world
come, Lord, and speak your word of peace and life

We pray for all those who are afraid at this time.

We pray for all those who are ill and for those who yearn for their health.

We pray for those who are homeless and for those who struggle to feed themselves and their families.

We pray for those who have lost their incomes or whose businesses are at risk.

We pray for all those who offer care during this crisis often putting their lives at risk to do so.

We pray for our government and all the governments of the world, for business leaders and all who hold any power.

We pray for those who feel voiceless and powerless.

We pray for those situations that no longer make the headlines for those suffering from conflicts, war and oppression,
for those seeking refuge and those who have no place of safety.

The Lord's Prayer

What line of the Lord's prayer stands out for you?

<https://youtu.be/LSrs1NhAoBk>

***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: Lord I lift your name on high

**Lord, I lift your name on high,
Lord, I love to sing your praises;
I'm so glad you're in my life,
I'm so glad you came to save us.**

**You came from heaven to earth
to show the way,
from the earth to the cross
my debt to pay,
from the cross to the grave,
from the grave to the sky:
Lord, I lift your name on high.**

or sing a verse of a hymn that comes to mind

A prayer of blessing

May the light of the resurrection shine on your way

May the peace of the resurrection hold you fast

And may the abundant life of the resurrection fill you and empower you

And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you

And those you love, now and always.

The Team at Bevern View invite you to join them in a time of worship called Big Church Day In

Songs published under CCLI No 6832