



AT HOME SERVICE

Sunday 21st April 2024

Fourth Sunday of Easter

*compiled by Michael Winter Local Preacher &
Anglican Lay Minister*

He is risen -
Faith sends an invite to start anew.
Give Christ your burdens and notions untrue.
Accept his forgiveness and salvation at the end.
Love the transformation the Holy Spirit extends.
He is risen indeed!
When Jesus rose, a new creation began
for all who believe and trust in God's plans.
Through his power, our darkness is rolled away—
"Jesus is the light," his resurrection proclaims!

(extract from 'He is Risen: A Poem about the Resurrection' by Jamie Trunnel.)

Hymn: STF 298

1] Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!
Earth and heaven in chorus say, Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia

2] Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!
Death in vain forbids him rise, Alleluia!
Christ has opened paradise, Alleluia!

3] Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia!
Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!
Once he died our souls to save, Alleluia!
Where's thy victory, boasting grave? Alleluia!

4] Soar we now where Christ has led, Alleluia!
Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!
Made like him, like him we rise, Alleluia!
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!

5] Hail the Lord of earth and heaven, Alleluia!
Praise to thee by both be given, Alleluia!
Thee we greet triumphant now, Alleluia!
Hail the Resurrection, thou, Alleluia!

Charles Wesley (1707 – 1788)

Prayers

Loving God, we confess that at times we do not share in the joy of the resurrection, but are caught in the worries of the world. We confess that we do not always live in the spirit of new life, but remain discontented, grumbling and anxious. Forgive us for not sharing in the Good News. Forgive us when we find it more comfortable to worry and complain than to risk the joy and encouragement of new life in Christ. Call us back to Your ways, O God, to seek hope and reconciliation, restoration and peace. In the name of the Risen Christ, we pray. Amen

We pray for all who believe in the Resurrection: that through our sharing in the life of the Risen Lord, this Easter time may mark for us a new beginning in our life of faith.

Lord in your mercy - Hear our prayer.

We pray for peace in our world: that the peace promised by the Lord will become a reality for all people.

Lord in your mercy - Hear our prayer.

We pray for all who have recently come to faith in the Risen Lord that they may continue to grow in faith & love of God.

Lord in your mercy - Hear our prayer.

We pray that people of every nation may come to share the joy of Easter, and that the Good news of the death and Resurrection of Christ may gladden the hearts of all.

Lord in your mercy - Hear our prayer.

We pray for all whose lifelong vigil for the Lord has ended and who now sleep in death, that they may live forever in Christ who has destroyed the power of death and opened the gates of heaven to all.

Lord in your mercy - Hear our prayer.

God our Father, through the Risen Christ you have made us your daughters and sons. We pray for the grace to accept and live to the full the new life you have given us. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Reading: Acts 4. 1-12

The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.

The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family. They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. Jesus is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone."

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."

Hymn: STF 312

1] The head that once was crowned with thorns
is crowned with glory now;
a royal diadem adorns
the mighty Victor's brow.

2] The highest place that Heaven affords
is his, is his by right,
the King of kings, and Lord of lords,
and Heaven's eternal Light.

3] The joy of all who dwell above,
the joy of all below;
to whom he demonstrates his love
and grants his name to know.

4] To them the cross, with all its shame,
with all its grace is given;
their name, an everlasting name,
their joy, the joy of Heaven.

5] They suffer with their Lord below,
they reign with him above;
their profit and their joy to know
the mystery of his love.

6] The cross he bore is life and health,
though shame and death to him;
his people's hope, his people's wealth,
their everlasting theme. *Jeremiah Clarke (c1674 - 1707)*

Reflection

For some reason the lectionary reading from Acts starts at verse 5, but I have included the preceding four verses to better give the context, and do read the previous chapter as well if you want the full story. Peter and John had, in the name of Christ, healed an un-named lame man attracting yet more attention to the newly emerging faith and giving rise to more believers. The concerns and fears that had led the authorities to condemn and crucify our Lord now led to persecution of the leaders of this troubling new faith. Peter and John were imprisoned overnight and called to account for their actions the following day, which Peter did in no uncertain terms – no denying of his Lord this time, but an uncompromising declaration of his belief in the power of the Risen Christ.

We are no longer part of a newly emergent faith, rather we have two thousand years of history to reflect on, centuries of Christian worship and witness with stories that can uplift us yes. But there are other stories too of how the church's witness has all too often been marred by power games, corruption and abuse. Those early Christians would have been shocked and saddened if they had known how in time the actions of some church leaders and so-called Christian political leaders directed against their opponents came to mirror the treatment meted out to those early disciples by the religious and political authorities. Churches have played their part in persecution and intolerance down through the centuries and sometimes still do, so that when we are confronted by criticism of our faith position today, humility is called for.

Yes, like Peter and John, we need to proclaim the Risen Christ, but we need to remember that whereas in their time, this was a new faith, in our day people carry a great deal of baggage. It may be what they have heard about the history of Christendom, such as Catholics persecuting Protestants and vice-versa, or what they read in the papers about contemporary intolerance in some churches, or even what they have experienced in their own lives with people failing to live up to their professed Christian beliefs.

So we have to find appropriate ways to proclaim the faith, but there is one constant with what Peter and John proclaimed – we also witness to the Risen Christ through acts of loving-kindness alongside preaching the good news. Peter and John landed up in trouble as much for the healing of the lame man as for their preaching. We are called to demonstrate the good news in our lives and actions, and those actions of love may still unsettle and disturb those with wealth and power.

The Collect

O ALMIGHTY God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men; Grant unto thy people, that they may love the thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Hymn: STF 594

1] Lord Jesus Christ, You have come to us,
You are one with us, Mary's Son;
Cleansing our souls from all their sin,
Pouring Your love and goodness in:
Jesus, our love for you we sing –
Living Lord!

2] Lord Jesus Christ, now and every day
Teach us how to pray, Son of God;
You have commanded us to do
This in remembrance Lord of you:
Into our lives your power breaks through –
Living Lord!

3] Lord Jesus Christ, You have come to us
Born as one with us, Mary's Son;
Led out to die on Calvary, risen from death to set us free
Living Lord Jesus, help us see –
You are Lord!

4] Lord Jesus Christ, I would come to you,
live my life for you, Son of God;
All your commands I know are true,
Your many gifts will make me new:
Into my life your power breaks through –
Living Lord!

Patrick Appleford (1925-2018)

And now, may the God of peace,
who brought back again from the dead our Lord Jesus,
equip you with all you need for doing his will.

May he produce in you,
through the power of Jesus Christ,
all this is pleasing to him.

To him be glory forever and ever. Amen