

18th April 2021
The Third Sunday of Easter

Morning Worship with Peter Widdess



Personal preparation before the service begins.

Please take time to remember wherever you are, we are all in the presence of God as one community. Give thanks and become still in the presence of God

Prelude

Greeting

Alleluia. Christ is risen.
He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Song: Now The Green Blade Rises (Noel Nouvelet)

1. Now the green blade rises from the buried grain,
wheat that in the dark earth many days has lain:
love lives again that with the dead has been:
Love is come again like wheat that springs up green.

2. In the grave they laid Him, Love whom hate had
slain,
thinking that He never would wake again,
laid in the earth, like grain that sleeps unseen.
Love is come again like wheat that springs up green.

3. Up He sprang at Easter, like the risen grain,
He who for the three days in the grave had lain,
raised from the dead my risen Lord is seen:
Love is come again like wheat that springs up green.

4. When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,
then your touch can call us back to life again -
fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:
Love is come again like wheat that springs up green.

CCLI Song # 6190459
John L. Bell | John Macleod Campbell Crum
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We pray with the words of Psalm 4

Answer me when I call to you,
my righteous God.

**Give me relief from my distress;
have mercy on me and hear my prayer.**

How long will you people turn my glory into shame?
How long will you love delusions and seek false
gods?

**Know that the Lord has set apart his faithful
servant for himself;
the Lord hears when I call to him.**

Tremble and do not sin;
when you are on your beds,
search your hearts and be silent.

**Offer the sacrifices of the righteous
and trust in the Lord.**

Many, Lord, are asking, “Who will bring us prosperity?”
Let the light of your face shine on us.

**Fill my heart with joy
when their grain and new wine abound.**

In peace I will lie down and sleep,
**for you alone, Lord,
make me dwell in safety.**

Glory be 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**

Collect for 3rd Sunday of Easter

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

The reading is taken from Acts 3.12-19

Let us prepare ourselves for the word of God
Our hearts and our minds are open.

When Peter saw this, he said to them: “Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.

“Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,

This is the word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Song: SoF 460 Peace to you

Peace to you.

We bless you now in the Name of the Lord.

Peace to you.

We bless you now in the Name of the Prince of Peace.

Peace to you. (repeat line at end)

CCLI Song # 30488

Graham Kendrick

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Gospel acclamation

Jesus Christ is risen from the dead.

Alleluia.

He has defeated the powers of death.

Alleluia.

Jesus turns our sorrow into dancing.

Alleluia.

He has the words of eternal life.

Alleluia.

Hear the gospel according Luke chapter 24.36b – 48

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence. He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

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Homily

Many of you will have read the gospels and noticed how Matthew, Mark and Luke are very often writing virtually the same story with only very small differences. Bible scholars have wondered whether they have a common text which all three used as a source. My first task I was given as a student of theology was to read the three accounts of the passion and crucifixion of Jesus and work out from the small differences which themes were important to which author. Only John's gospel tells the story of Jesus in its own way. But when we come to the story of the Easter and the resurrection, we find that each of the four gospels tells the story in a completely different way. There is no text which they share with each other.

You may remember from Easter Day we heard Mark's account of the women at the empty tomb, their not understanding what the angel was saying, their dread and fear. Their story is disturbing. The risen Lord does not appear in Mark's account at all.

Then last Sunday we heard part of the account of Easter in John's Gospel. Tini pointed out the fear of the

disciples who were more or less hiding in a locked room. This led her on to meditate on what the risen Jesus said three times in the course of John's story both to the disciples and then later to doubting Thomas: Peace be with you. She made the point very clearly that it is wrong to feel the 'should trap' – I should or I must feel the peace of Christ. Instead she invited us to "experience the assurance of salvation, contentment and fearless that comes with the εἰρήνη eiréné peace."

Today we have heard an excerpt from Luke's account of the disciples first meeting with the risen Jesus. The main accent in Luke's gospel is on the two disciples who were trying to get away from Jerusalem, fleeing the disaster of the crucifixion. Confused and irritated by stories from a few women who had spoken of the risen Jesus, these two men just want to go as far away as possible.

You may notice the sub theme of the Easter stories in all the gospel accounts so far, the fear and dejection. A man joins them and draws out of them in conversation what is troubling them and helps them in some sense to order their thoughts and realise what had happened in the last few days. It is only when they share a meal with each other, and the man breaks the bread, that they realise that the risen Jesus has been with them all the time. They run back to Jerusalem to share with their friends what had happened. It is here that today's gospel takes up the account. They had just started talking with the other disciples when Jesus appears, and he says those same words which were central to Tini's homily last week: "peace be with you."

Tini spoke of the peace of Jesus leading to a tranquility of spirit that is content, fearless, attractive, and perhaps contagious to those around us.

Remember that when we get on to the reading from Acts.

But before that I want to add a further aspect to our understanding of peace which Jesus gives here. Jesus is not speaking Greek but rather Hebrew or Aramaic. He would have used the word "shalom", with all its connotations in the first Testament. Shalom is more

than spiritual peace or political or personal individual peace. The whole of creation is involved in God's shalom. It is a peace which goes through everything bringing the whole of creation, not just human beings, into unity with God in which wrongs are forgiven, sickness is healed and new life becomes possible. This is what Luke is showing us in his description of the appearance of Jesus amongst his friends. Initially they are "startled and frightened and thinking they saw a ghost", something unreal, not part of God's creation, a mirage, a phantasy. Jesus answers their fright by offering them his peace, not just as idea but physically present in his body, healed from the wounds of the cross, as part of creation. Now his friends are still not sure whether they are crying for sorrow or weeping for joy. So Jesus underlines the wholeness of his peace in the eating of a bit of broiled fish. He talks with them. He helps them to see him and his mission in the light of the Hebrew scriptures. He gives them time to grow in a wholeness of peace, trust and contentment in God's love.

Time goes by. Jesus is no longer there. The disciples are on their own and have experienced in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit oneness with God. They have begun to gather people who want to follow the way of Jesus. They are a "reform" movement within the Jewish faith, so it is completely normal, that as was their practice Peter and John go one day into the Temple in Jerusalem to pray. They see a cripple begging at the temple gate, as he does every day. How often will they have hurried by not wanting to look the cripple in eye, as I myself so often do in the streets of Freiburg. But Peter and John are full of the peace of Jesus. They are content and sure of themselves in their faith. This peace of the risen Jesus is transforming them in their entirety. It is contagious. A person who knows him or herself to be loved appears to others to be self-confident and attractive, loved and lovely. Peter and John feel in themselves a certain fearlessness. So when the cripple looks at them and hopes, Peter says: I have no silver or gold; but what I have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk. The man stands up, walks and is overjoyed.

The people in the Temple want to see what has happened. In the reading we heard how Peter reacts. He makes it very clear to the crowd: We are not wonder healers. "Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?..... It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him."

Luke, in his account of what happened on that day, how Peter and John were arrested later and tried, put in prison and what happened after that, raises many issues which are not relevant for the homily this morning. My reading of the gospel is that we see how in the meeting with the risen Jesus, in the gift of his peace, in the transformation and healing of the disciples, there is a commission for us to be a healing community, a community of peace, of shalom.

We are in the midst of a pandemic, which we cannot heal in itself. But we are experiencing lockdown and AHA. There is the paralysis of loneliness, the sin of jealousy at those who already have been vaccinated, the depression of timelessness – when will it all end, the colic of anger over the mistakes which those up there seem to have made, the fever of emptiness of routine without touch or embrace of so many other friends, relatives, grandchildren.

But remember: the risen Lord is amongst us and says "Peace be with you". We are a community sharing this peace. It may be the case that not many of us actually sicken with the virus. I hope only too sincerely that even fewer will die of the illness. But whether now in the course of the pandemic and just as certainly afterwards when the pandemic no longer is officially active, we have been marked through what we have experienced and it will take a long time before the weakness of body or soul recovers. We will need healing; we will need forgiveness and reconciliation with each other. We will need again and again the peace of Jesus which passes all understanding and enables us to grow content in the love of God, become fearless, attractive, and perhaps contagious in the best possible sense to those around us. To vary Peter's words: it is not our own power or godliness with which we will overcome the aftermaths of the pandemic. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that

will completely heal us. Easter is about new life. Easter is an invitation to remember this through this coming long and wearying year.

A final picture, which has accompanied me through this last year: my grandparents lived in St Helens in Lancashire in a simple terrace house between the coal pit and the centre of town. On the mantelpiece in the backroom was a photo of one year old child. I asked my mother once: who is that child? She answered: "She is my sister, your aunt. She died in the Spanish flu pandemic in 1918 shortly after the picture was taken. I was born after her death. I never knew her." The picture remained there on the mantelpiece until both my grandparents died.

We will all need healing for a very long time. Let us hear Jesus say to us: peace be with you.

Song: ACF 5 All I once held dear

1. All I once held dear, built my life upon,
All this world reveres and wars to own;
All I once thought gain I have counted loss,
Spent and worthless now compared to this.
Knowing You, Jesus, knowing You,
There is no greater thing.
You're my all, You're the best,
You're my joy, my righteousness,
And I love You, Lord.

3. Oh, to know the pow'r of Your risen life,
And to know You in Your sufferings;
To become like You in Your death, my Lord,
So with You to live and never die.
Knowing You, Jesus, knowing You,
There is no greater thing.
You're my all, You're the best,
You're my joy, my righteousness,
And I love You, Lord. love You Lord

Intercessions (by Solveyg)

Today's reading from Acts 3 says:

"Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

For me the first sentence: "...I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders." is somehow describing very well what's happening in our world these times. Flooded with news and stories every day, confused by unreliable rules and orders, frustrated and irritated when hearing about non stoppable violence, ignorance, selfishness, death and still hunger for power I feel like wanting to cry out like the psalmist:

"Answer me when I call to you my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer."

So I pray:

Heavenly Father, facing the third wave of Corona with new mutants appearing all over the world; open the minds of every leader in charge, that they may be guided by your wisdom in making their decisions, considering both, scientific facts as well as the essential needs of people, economy and the whole society. Teach them to act according to their entrusted responsibilities instead of satisfying a hunger of power or being driven by a fear of losing their post after a coming election.

Lord in our mercy – **hear our prayer**

Most righteous God, we pray for the worldwide Christian Church in all its wonderful diversity. We pray especially for those churches who meet together in difficult and dangerous circumstances and at this time of the Pandemic for all those churches who cannot meet in person but only online. May they feel your abiding presence to uphold their courage and strengthen their faith.

We pray for our Chaplaincy here in Freiburg; send your peace and support to all those who lead and inspire our worship, who make sure, that we can meet online, who are leading us in prayer and worship. Bless all people in our congregation giving themselves in pastoral care, holding us together despite of the necessary reduction of contacts. We also pray for our new minister, that the ongoing procedures of bringing him and his family here may succeed successfully soon.

Lord in our mercy – **hear our prayer**

Mercyful God, we bring before you all people in need for any reason, a difficult economic or social situation, problems in coping with the demanding Corona situation or being sick, mentally or bodily. We pray especially for Margaret and Brian. Strengthen and comfort them with your healing power and loving peace. We thank you for Carers whose love and compassion bring both material and spiritual comfort at times of need. Strengthen them with power, understanding and hopeful perseverance through your Spirit in their inner being.

(silence is kept for personal prayers)

Lord in our mercy – **hear our prayer**

As part of the Anglican Church of England our deep sympathy is with our brothers and sisters in England. That's why my final prayer of intercession today is quoted from the Church of England's webpage:

A PRAYER ON THE DEATH OF HRH THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH

God of our lives,

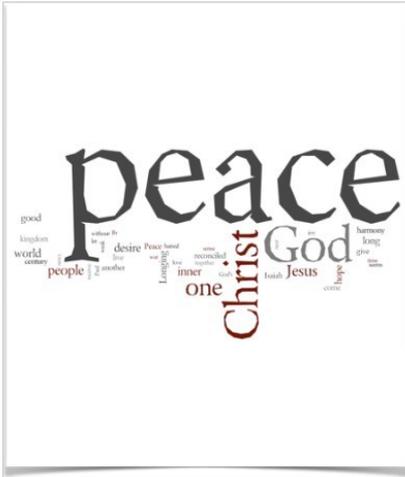
we give thanks for the life of Prince Philip,

for his love of our country,

and for his devotion to duty.

We entrust him now to your love and mercy,
through our Redeemer Jesus Christ.

Amen.



The Lord's Prayer

Let us pray together as Christ has taught us:
Our Father....

Peace

The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and said, 'Peace be with you.'
Then were they glad when they saw the Lord. Alleluia.
We share with each other the peace of the risen Lord



Blessing

God, who through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ
has given us the victory,
give you joy and peace in your faith;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
be upon you and remain with you always.
Amen

Dismissal

Alleluia. Christ is risen.
He is risen indeed. Alleluia.
Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
He has given us new life and hope.
He has raised Jesus from the dead.
God has claimed us as his own.
He has brought us out of darkness.
He has made us light to the world.
Alleluia. Christ is risen.
He is risen indeed. Alleluia

Postlude: ACF 38 For The Healing Of The Nations (Westminster Abbey)

1. For the healing of the nations,
Lord, we pray with one accord,
for a just and equal sharing,
of the things that earth affords.
To a life of love in action
help us rise and pledge our word.

4. You, Creator God, have written
Your great name on humankind;
for our growing in Your likeness
bring the life of Christ to mind;
that by our response and service
earth its destiny may find.

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Fred Kaan | Henry Purcell
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