

In & around the Benefice....

26th April | Third Sunday of Easter

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including recordings of our own Benefice Sunday Morning Prayer Services at

<http://www.yardleyhastingsbenefice.co.uk/worship/worship-during-the-lockdown>

Easter 3 Reflection: Luke 24: 13-35

HOPE – it's a lovely word. Full of optimism, looking forward. Remember as a child being asked what you hope for at Christmas or birthdays? Sometimes those hopes were fulfilled, but sometimes there was disappointment. That's a small example, but true despair and discouragement can be soul destroying. Human hope is a fragile thing, and when it withers, it's difficult to revive. At the moment we are all going on a roller coaster ride - hopes raised of fewer cases of Covid 19, maybe an easing of the lockdown, then discouraging news that it may be the end of the year or even longer before we can return to some sort of normal life. We may even be afraid to hope - can we cope with another let-down?

Our reading tells of a couple of Jesus' followers who are in a similar despairing mood – "We had hoped ..." Cleopas and his friend said. "We had high hopes for the future, but now those hopes are gone and all we have left is disappointment." Can you identify with their feelings ?

And so they pour out their story to a stranger who seemed willing to listen to their tale of hopes and disappointments. He doesn't tell them to "snap out of it", he simply provides a listening ear. As they talk of their dashed hopes, the stranger walks with them. We know that the stranger was Jesus.

Isn't that a great picture – Jesus walking along with his despondent and confused disciples, sharing their troubles? Suddenly this 2,000-year-old story is brought into the present. When discouragement, depression and despair fill our lives, Jesus is the unseen "stranger" who walks with us just as he walked with those two disciples on the road to Emmaus. He points us to God's Word of promise in the Bible that tells us again that we are God's dearly loved children and that he will stand by us through thick and thin. He turns our despair into hope. When our Emmaus road is filled with discouragement and despair, let's walk it with Jesus.

Please hold in your prayers this week:

- ◇ Those suffering from, affected by or working to prevent the spread of Coronavirus, including the NHS, council workers, teachers in schools offering childcare for those who work in key jobs.
- ◇ NHS staff caring for Covid-19 patients, that they may have strength and resilience for their task, and be kept safe.
- ◇ Persecuted Christians across the world, especially in North Korea
- ◇ Those in residential care and the housebound, among them: Audrey Desborough, Ruth Williams, Gwen York, Ann and Colin Dix
- ◇ Those who suffer in body, mind or spirit, among them: Chris Sayles, Tom Stock, Nicholas Vaughan, Freddie Hogan, Mandy Bates, Mhairi Boyde, Phillip Houghton
- ◇ The recently departed, amongst them Julie Quilter, Jennifer Barry-Murray and all who grieve at this time

The Collect

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

First Reading

Acts 2 : 14a, 36-41

On the day of Pentecost, Peter, standing with the
eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd:

‘Let the entire house of Israel know with certainty
that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this
Jesus whom you crucified.’

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the
heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles,
‘Brothers, what should we do?’ Peter said to them,
‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the
name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be
forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy
Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children,
and for all who are far away, everyone whom the
Lord our God calls to him.’

And he testified with many other arguments and
exhorted them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this
corrupt generation.’ So those who welcomed his
message were baptized, and that day about three
thousand persons were added to their number.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Reading

Luke 24: 13-35

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according
to Luke. **Glory to you, O Lord**

On that same day two of the disciples were going
to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles
from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about
all these things that had happened.
While they were talking and discussing, Jesus
himself came near and went with them, but their
eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said
to them, ‘What are you discussing with each other
while you walk along?’ They stood still, looking
sad.

Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas,
answered him, ‘Are you the only stranger in
Jerusalem who does not know the things that have
taken place there in these days?’ He asked them,
‘What things?’ They replied, ‘The things about
Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in
deed and word before God and all the people, and
how our chief priests and leaders handed him over
to be condemned to death and crucified him. But
we had hoped that he was the one to redeem
Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third
day since these things took place. Moreover, some
women of our group astounded us. They were at
the tomb early this morning, and when they did not
find his body there, they came back and told us that
they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said
that he was alive. Some of those who were with us
went to the tomb and found it just as the women
had said; but they did not see him.’

Then he said to them, ‘Oh, how foolish you are, and
how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets
have declared! Was it not necessary that the
Messiah should suffer these things and then enter
into his glory?’

Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he
interpreted to them the things about himself in all
the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were
going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But
they urged him strongly, saying, ‘Stay with us,
because it is almost evening and the day is now
nearly over.’ So he went in to stay with them. When
he was at the table with them, he took bread,
blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then
their eyes were opened, and they recognized him;
and he vanished from their sight. They said to each
other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while
he was talking to us on the road, while he was
opening the scriptures to us?’ That same hour they
got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found
the eleven and their companions gathered
together. They were saying, ‘The Lord has risen
indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!’ Then they
told what had happened on the road, and how he
had been made known to them in the breaking of
the bread.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Prayer *(from St Patrick's Breastplate)*

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger

Amen