

**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION**  
**SUNDAY 24 APRIL 2022- 2<sup>nd</sup> of Easter**

**COLLECT**

Risen Christ,  
for whom no door is locked, no entrance barred:  
open the doors of our hearts, that we may seek the good of others  
and walk the joyful road of sacrifice and peace, to the praise of God the Father. Amen.

**Psalm 150**

- 1 Alleluia.  
O praise God in his holiness; ♦  
praise him in the firmament of his power.
- 2 Praise him for his mighty acts; ♦  
praise him according to his excellent greatness.
- 3 Praise him with the blast of the trumpet; ♦  
praise him upon the harp and lyre.
- 4 Praise him with timbrel and dances; ♦  
praise him upon the strings and pipe.
- 5 Praise him with ringing cymbals; ♦  
praise him upon the clashing cymbals.
- 6 Let everything that has breath ♦  
praise the Lord.  
Alleluia.

**Acts 5: 27-32**

<sup>27</sup> When they had brought them, they had them stand before the council. The high priest questioned them, <sup>28</sup> saying, 'We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,<sup>[a]</sup> yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you are determined to bring this man's blood on us.' <sup>29</sup> But Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than any human authority.'<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>30</sup> The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. <sup>31</sup> God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour, so that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. <sup>32</sup> And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.'

## **John 20: 19-31**

### **Jesus Appears to the Disciples**

<sup>19</sup> 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.' <sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' <sup>22</sup> When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

### **Jesus and Thomas**

<sup>24</sup> But Thomas (who was called the Twin<sup>[a]</sup>), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> 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.'

<sup>26</sup> 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.' <sup>27</sup> 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.' <sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' <sup>29</sup> 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**

<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. <sup>31</sup> But these are written so that you may come to believe<sup>[b]</sup> that Jesus is the Messiah,<sup>[c]</sup> the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

## ***A Reflection from Hannah...***

The commission that Christ gives us can seem a bit enormous- even too much to bear. 'If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained'. It's a level of authority that feels far beyond our remit. Who are we to forgive or retain sins?!

Of course we haven't the wisdom or moral high ground to do this in our own strength. And in fact, we are not asked to. The key to the invitation to join in with God's mission lies in the verse before. Jesus gave those first disciples (and gives us) himself, living in us and working through us. In John's Gospel, on the first day of the week- resurrection evening- there is a Pentecost moment. Jesus breathes on those present and says 'receive the Holy Spirit'. It is by God's Spirit that we are called into this life of love, and it is through God's Spirit that we are ministers of peace and reconciliation in the world- never in our own strength; always in the name of Christ.

And it is reconciliation, rather judgement, that lies behind that command to forgive or retain sins. We are human, we are fallible and our experience of God at work in us can be flawed or misunderstood. Only Christ is perfect in his discernment of what constitutes sin. As brothers and sisters in Christ- the Church- we know we get things wrong, and we ask for forgiveness when that becomes clear. But we also, together, pray for the Holy Spirit to fill us afresh as we follow Jesus and seek his will. Part of the command about 'retaining sins' is to be a prophetic voice that names those ways which fall short of the glory of God and mar the image of Christ in one another. That too is part of our resurrection reality, as our Archbishops reminded us this Easter Day.

So the Holy Spirit always draws us onwards in the mission Christ gives us. Being 'filled with the Spirit' is to continue the work of proclaiming Jubilee to a world in pain- of bringing wholeness and peace, in our actions as well as our words. That's clear in the first reading from Acts. Peter and the Apostles are being questioned by the High Priest, and their response is a direct consequence of that momentous encounter that first Easter evening; an encounter that is ours today just as much as it was then. They preach Christ risen, and they say:

'We are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him'.

As inheritors of the faith, living in the joy of the resurrection, we pray this Eastertide- Come Holy Spirit, fill us afresh as our witness continues. Amen.