



"Peace be
with you."

Easter 2
19 April 2020

Jesus appears to His disciples

God is good... all the time

Call to worship

Glorious God of all,
you are the giver of new life.
You are the one to whom we owe
each breath. You are the reason for our
hope. Send your enlivening spirit. Be present
with us as we come close to you; seeking your
light to see what has been revealed; seeking
your warmth to set hearts aglow with your love
and seeking your truth, that we might trust.

As we, your Easter people, proclaim that you
are alive and here with us, reinvigorate our
faith. Stir up our love for you and your people.

Prayer

When everything was dark, and it seemed
that the sun would never shine again, your love
broke through. Your love was too strong, too
wide, too deep for death to hold. The sparks
cast by your love dance and spread and burst
forth with resurrection light.

Gracious God, we praise you for the light
of new life made possible through Jesus.
We praise you for the light of new life that
shone on the first witnesses of resurrection.
We praise you for the light of new life that
continues to shine in our hearts today.

We confess that too often we have lived
lives of those not worthy to be called your
children. Though you are light, we have
preferred to lurk in the shadow; though you are
truth, we have made idols of lies and falsehood;
though you are love, we have been hard of
heart.

We turn to you with repentant hearts and
seek your forgiveness. We pray that the Easter
light of life, hope and joy, will live in us each
day; and that we will be bearers of that light into
the lives of others. Amen. Andrew Kimmitt, Kinnoull Parish Church

The Lord's Prayer

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And
lead us not into temptation, but deliver us
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the
power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

BIBLE READINGS:

Psalm 62:5-8

⁵ Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes
from him. ⁶ Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. ⁷ My
salvation and my honour depend on God; he is my
mighty rock, my refuge. ⁸ Trust in him at all times,
you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is
our refuge.

JOHN 20:19 – 23

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week,
when the disciples were together, with the doors
locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came
and stood among them and said, "Peace be with
you!" ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his
hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed
when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Again Jesus said,
"Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I
am sending you." ²² And with that he breathed on
them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you
forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you
do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Closed doors - *When is a door not a door? When it is ajar!*

The image of 'The Door' is pivotal to the continuing
story of the effects of Jesus' resurrection. Is the
door closed or open? We meet the disciples stuck
behind a 'closed door'. It seems quite
understandable that they would be afraid of the
religious leaders who pursued Jesus and put him to
death. It would be quite natural for them to fear the
same could happen to them.

Perhaps they thought safety in numbers was
appropriate and especially behind the protection of
a locked door. Despite Mary Magdalene's
proclamation to them that Jesus had appeared to
her, this wasn't enough to persuade them to venture
out in confidence.

'Closed doors' don't necessarily need to be
seen as something negative. When we consider our
own lives we realise that at times closing the door
on the world is good and sometimes even
necessary. When we are under par, recovering from
illness or surgery, or just needing to reflect and take
stock, we physically and metaphorically close the
door on the world. Maybe the disciples should not
be criticised for any lack of courage; maybe rightly
they were taking stock of things and recharging the
batteries. But also, by the very definition of 'door' we
must agree that 'doors' should not stay closed for
too long; a door is not a wall! Doors are for going
through, going out and coming in.

Brief Reflection

The resurrection of our Lord Jesus is the single most important event in human history. It is also a time for us, Easter People, to celebrate and to be happy. But this is not always the case. There are times, like this time of uncertainty and continuing lockdown, when good news is not always followed by rejoicing. This was the case on the day of resurrection. John's Gospel (20:19) recounts that in the evening of that same day, Jesus' friends, on learning that He was alive, surprisingly did not immediately burst out with joy. Instead, they gathered together [in a house] 'with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders'. Jesus' tomb was open! Their master was on the loose, but they had locked themselves in a house, bound with fear. Their house had become their tomb.

This 'tomb' of the disciples is similar, in many ways, to 'tombs' we may, for many reasons, find ourselves in. The doors of these tombs (whatever they may be – if there are any) are always locked from the inside. Furthermore, these 'tombs'; these locked places of our lives are always more about what is going on, on the inside of us than on the outside. Maybe, like the disciples, it is fear. Maybe, it is the questions, disbelief, or the conditions we place on our faith. Perhaps it is sorrow, or loss or the wounds that are so deep that we think it is not worth taking the risk to step outside. For some, it may be anger or resentment or even the inability to explore new ideas, possibilities, and changes.

We read in John's Gospel how Jesus mysteriously entered the house of his fear-stricken followers and said, 'Peace be with you'. With this single act he demonstrated that, in times like this, it is often not wise to try to 'pull' people out their pain, fear, mess or brokenness; out of their 'tombs'. He showed how helpful it is (and can be) when the helper comes alongside the people in need, seeking to join them in their locked places.

Note also that Jesus did not open the door from the outside. But, after he had joined them in the house and with the power-filled words, 'Peace be with you', he, in effect, gave his friends his peace; the peace they needed to unlock the doors of their 'tomb', then step out into a new life in Christ.

We too do well not to dwell on the past, on our fears or even on our weaknesses. We are enjoined to look to the risen Christ to receive the peace he gives. When we stumble, he is at our elbow - ready and able to steady us. When we go stray, he comes with his light to guide us back to the right path. And if feelings of guilt, shame or regret risk to overpower us, we should remember that even Judas was called friend by the very one he betrayed. Christ comes into our lives, our spaces, our 'tombs', our locked places – saying, 'Peace be with you'. He asks us, again as Easter People, to share His peace with our fear-stricken neighbourhood. So, let us refuse to live in fear.

Let us shout for joy, even during these uncertain times, because our redeemer lives. *Because he lives, we can face tomorrow. Because He lives all fear is gone. We know he holds the future and life is worth the living - just because Jesus lives. Amen.*

Prayer for others

It is such a simple word: 'Peace'. Five letters which spell out some of our greatest hopes: peace in our world; peace in our towns; peace in our homes; peace in our hearts. Written down, read aloud, it looks and sounds so simple, but, in reality, it feels impossible.

Many people in our world are locked behind bars of steel for speaking the truth. Many people in our towns are locked behind doors for fear of violence or ridicule. Many people in our midst are locked behind a story they fear to share in case of what others may think of them.

God, our Peacemaker, hear their cries, see and taste their tears, feel their pain. God, our Peace-bringer, still our emotional storms, soothe the troubled mind, turn the energy spent in doubt and dismay to works of compassion, grace and love, so that, one day, we may share the peace of Christ for all, with all, forever. Peace be with us... May it be so. Amen

Hymn: Crown Him with many crowns

1. Crown Him with many crowns
The Lamb upon the throne
While Heaven's eternal anthem drowns
all music but it's own. Awake my soul and sing,
of Him who died to be,
your Saviour and your matchless King,
through all eternity
2. Crown Him the Lord of peace
His kingdom is at hand.
From pole to pole let warfare cease.
And Christ rule every land, a city stands on
high, His glory it displays
And there the nations holy cry
In joyful hymns of praise
3. Crown Him the Lord of years
The potentate of time
Creator of the rolling spheres.
In majesty sublime, all hail Redeemer hail
for You have died for me,
Your praise shall never never fail
Through all eternity

CCLI Song # 2340870. © Word & Music - The Jubilate Group

Final prayer/ benediction

Dance, celebrate, sing, and shout for joy!
Christ is Risen and He goes before us,
into this world of fear and pain. He has
called us to bring the Good News of
healing and hope, of redemption.
Let us in peace, and feel the
presence of the Risen Lord with
us now and forever. Amen.

*God is good ...
all the time...*