

Prayer of Approach – The Right Reverend Dr Martin Fair,

Loving Lord, Peter really did know the blues. In fact, in those few short years following Jesus, he went through all of the experiences of life. The highs and lows, ups and downs, the successes and failures. From the mountain top to the valley bottom.

It all began on the beach at Galilee, when Jesus came and called him and his brother Andrew to follow. And from there all the way to that awful moment of having denied that he even knew Jesus. And yet you Lord, not done with Peter, you came to him, assured him of your forgiveness, and commissioned him.

And so we thank you for Peter. And then thinking about him, we see something of ourselves. For we too are a mixture of getting it right and messing it up. We too are a mixture of bravery and cowardice. We too are a mixture of wisdom and foolishness. And yet Lord, as Peter did in response to Jesus question "Do you love me?", we too would respond, "Yes Lord, you know we love you".

And so we pray that you would forgive us our shortcomings, our failures, and that by the power of your Holy Spirit you would assure us of forgiveness, and that in the days to come you would use us as you use Peter, for the building of your church, the establishing of your kingdom. Lord there are days for singing the blues and there are days for hallelujahs. Lead us faithfully in your footsteps we pray, in Jesus name. Amen

All Age Talk – Lesley Ewing, Kirkton Parish Church, Carlisle

And this is our Church – where on a normal Sunday morning I would be talking to all our little ones and older ones about God and Jesus. I am so excited to be here talking with you all today and if you have been on your Easter holidays from school – I hope you have been having some great fun with your family and your friends! But can I ask you a question? If you have been on holiday these last few weeks. Are you missing not being at school? Are you looking forward to going back to school and learning lots and lots of new things? It's been a very, very long time since I went to school – in fact it's almost 30 years since I left school! Wow – I feel old

Anyway... Do you ever find it hard to understand the things that you are supposed to be learning at school? Do you ever think – nope I just don't understand that? For me it was Algebra...it made absolutely no sense and I always ended up being really confused and not understanding what it was that I was meant to be doing! Have you ever tried doing algebra? Have a look at this one. Solve in 40 seconds?? This would take me 40 hours to solve – at least!!

What about when you are trying to learn a different language and you just don't know what someone is trying to tell you? *Je ne comprends pas*. Which is French for I don't understand!! It's not a nice feeling when you don't understand what it is that you are supposed to be learning

Can I tell you something else? I can never understand what I am supposed to be looking at in an Optical Illusion I mean how many legs is this elephant supposed to have???? And in case you are wondering it's 4!! Sometimes I get a little confused and don't understand some of the things that I read in the Bible? Because in Psalm 1 it says that... That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither – whatever they do prospers. Like...how is a person like a tree and what part of them is a fruit and they have leaves? I wonder what kind of fruit I'd like to be made out of?

Our bible passage today is all about Jesus' friends not really understanding what was happening and what they were seeing! Jesus' friends were all gathered in a room after he had been crucified. They all believed that Jesus was dead. And they were sad...really, really sad. They didn't know what to do...

And then SUDDENLY... A man appeared in the room with them! It was Jesus! But how could it be him? They had seen what had happened to him! They had watched

as he was put in the tomb! How could it possibly be Jesus? They didn't understand what was happening. They all were a little confused and a little bit scared. But Jesus talked to them.

Jesus explained it all to them...just like a teacher explains things to you when you're at school and not really sure about the hard sum or the tricky question – or when someone points out what you are meant to be seeing in a picture! Jesus showed them the marks on his hands and feet. He let his friends touch him to show them that he was really there and he even had his dinner with them. And after he did all of these things? His friends knew...deep in their hearts. They weren't confused anymore. They understood that it really was JESUS – their friend - and he was with them.

But Jesus also wanted them to really understand that everything that had happened to him was just how the Bible said it would happen. God wants us all to know all about the wonderful things in the Bible and all about Jesus. And even though at times we don't always understand some of things in the bible – we can believe them. Because Jesus told us – just like he told his friends. And the most important thing he tells us? Is just how much he loves us. Take care and stay safe – Bye!

Scripture Reading – The Right Reverend Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly - Luke 24:13-35 (NIV) On the Road to Emmaus

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, "What were you discussing together as you were walking?" They stood still, their faces downcast.

One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.

And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Sermon – Very Rev. Dr Susan Brown, Dornoch Cathedral

“Peace be with you!” Don’t just let those words pass you by – hold them... savour them... let them swirl around your head until they seep down into your heart... into your soul... Peace be with you. Jesus’ resurrection appearances all begin with Jesus reassuring his friends – first of all he reassures them that they’re not “seeing” things – but then Jesus also reassures them that they are, still, his friends... he doesn’t go over their failures – what they did and didn’t do – instead he talks to them and explains things to them – and as he does, he reignites the flame of hope within them.

And notice, when Jesus says: “Peace be with you”, he’s saying it as he stands in the middle of a room full of frightened, confused, uncertain followers of his... and he offers the phrase, not as a throw away greeting, but as a prayerful blessing on his friends – so that those friends don’t let the past get in the way of the present... and so that... they don’t let all their fears and their worries – all their wild imaginings – so that they don’t let any of these things either, drown out what really matters...

And what really matters is that right there, right then – Jesus is with them. In person. For real. Peace be with you, says Jesus – hush... be still.... Make room to meet me. Make room to listen to my voice... make room to reach out and touch me... And discover ...how real I am. Immediately before Jesus appeared on this resurrection day evening, his friends had been hearing from two other disciples about how, when they were walking home to Emmaus and were talking about Jesus’ crucifixion, a stranger had joined them and as they’d walked and talked, this stranger had opened up the Scriptures to them – and explained how Jesus’ arrest and death and the empty tomb, had to happen

And somehow the conversation calmed the two heading home. Then arriving at Emmaus, the two had invited the stranger to eat with them because it was getting late. It was when they sat down together and shared bread... that the two suddenly realised who it was who was with them – and as quickly as he appeared the stranger vanished. But he left the two with hearts burning... and he left them with such an energy and excitement that they ran all the way back to Jerusalem; to tell the others what had happened. Which is where we picked up the story.

Everyone was going over all the sightings of Jesus and trying to work out what it might possibly mean - when Jesus suddenly appeared among them. Jesus offered his friends the peace that their swimming heads and hearts really needed – but then realised he had some work to do before that peace could sink in; so he says to everyone there: Look at me. Hear the words I speak. Touch me. Give me something to eat.... It’s only after Jesus has encouraged his followers to grasp how real he is with every sense, that he sits down with them and begins to respond to all their questions and their confusion and their wondering.

For Luke who wrote this Gospel, it is so important that whoever reads or hears his words, gets the message that Jesus’ appearances after his resurrection – are not ghostly – they are real, living, flesh and blood moments – moments that offer a presence so tangible that Jesus is able to transform the sadness he meets into joy... he’s able to turn the disbelief he encounters into trust... and the despair people are feeling ...into hope... Jesus’ is a presence so real that he refreshes faith. He renews lives. And re-energises the weary. Hallelujah!

And perhaps this is why this story is one that we very much need to hear in Scotland. In 2021. This resurrection encounter happens in a wee rented room in Jerusalem, with a tiny group of frightened and lost followers who thought their spiritual dreams were over. Standing with them, Jesus has other ideas. He announces to the group that the good news of his rising again is going to be preached to all nations... - and tells them that this worldwide roll out, is to begin in Jerusalem... in this very room.... Remember - just a few moments earlier, the fear in that room had been palpable. These people who are

with Jesus are no wonder workers... they are people who are lost and weary and sore, with no real idea of what they should be doing – or of how they should do it. They are people with far more questions than they have answers... And yet looking them in the eye, Jesus tells this motley crew that it’s through them, that the good news is going to be preached to all nations... Through them! For now, the believers in Jerusalem are to wait – but soon, very soon so Jesus promises, God’s Spirit will be poured out upon them and starting local, they will go global with their message of the real and risen Christ. And that Spirit will be poured out on all... on women and on men... on everyone.

And to make that happen, what Jesus wants his friends to do... is...he wants them to work with him and to witness to him. They are to tell Jesus’ story – and they are to live that story - doing as Jesus did.

That is... We are to witness to Jesus. We are to tell his story and live it. We are to do as Jesus did... Which involves reaching out to people who are lost and confused and frightened.... It means searching for those who are hurting – and to those too, who are suffering... it means walking with the poorest, with those looked down on, with those others dismiss... it means listening to the people whose voices are not heard – as well as to the cries of the earth itself –

It means sharing the peace of Christ – and inviting people to look, listen, touch, know and meet Jesus for themselves... (pause) These words feel so timely as we look to a very different, post-covid future. What we have right now, is an opportunity to re-orientate our focus as congregations and as a church, from what’s aye been – to what could be. This is a chance for us – not to go back to what was, but this is a chance for us to re-shape the way church is and to re-shape too, how we express ourselves as worshipping, witnessing communities, committed to Christ and to serving those around us – especially the most vulnerable - in Christ’s name.

And if you think it all sounds too big an ask, just think of that room in Jerusalem with its scared, lost and frightened followers. Jesus called them with to spread the good news... and 21 centuries later, that Good News is still being preached... in every corner of the globe. For the one who rose from the dead – nothing is impossible. We need to live as though we believe that.... and not let our own fears stop us recognising the risen Christ in our midst. Peace be with you.

Prayer of Intercession - The Right Reverend Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly

I will speak out for those who have no voices. I will stand up for the rights of all the oppressed. I will speak truth and justice. I’ll defend the poor and the needy. I will lift up the weak in Jesus name. I will speak out for those who have no choices. I will cry out for those who live without love. I will show God’s compassion to the crushed and broken in spirit. I will lift up the weak in Jesus name.

Almighty and everlasting God, forgive us if we have sung songs and not taken their meanings into our daily lives. And so in all the days to come, may we each individually and together as a church, speak out for those who have no voices, stand with the oppressed, speak for truth and justice, and defend the poor and the needy.

Yes, let us speak out for those who have no choices. Let us cry out for those who live without love. And yes, in this day and all the days to come, let us show God’s compassion to the crushed and broken in spirit. Lord we would be as Jesus. In his name we pray, Amen

Blessing – The Right Reverend Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly

Now go in peace and may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you and those you love this day and forever more. Amen. I hope you have been blessed by our worship today. Let me again thank those who took part and those who were behind the scenes bringing things together in the technical sense. We’re very grateful, thank you. Bye for now.