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Dear Friends,

As we approach both Holy Week, and the anniversary of the first Covid-19 lockdown, God drew John 20:19-22 to my attention, as we look forward to the slow emergence out of our third (and hopefully final) lockdown.

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.

The disciples had been tucked away in the upper room, fearful for their lives. But the risen Jesus comes amongst them, comforts them, gives them His peace and then His power, and then He sends them out. We also know from Luke's account that there was some waiting still to be done, until the fullness of the Holy Spirit fell at Pentecost.

Jesus' death & resurrection, bought for His disciples, then and now, a life of freedom. Their greatest fears have been overcome, and the presence of God is with them and in them. Death is defeated, there is a hope of eternal life, and the disciples are told to go and live this out, in their everyday lives, showing other people what Jesus has done, and is doing for us.

There are some parallels with our current circumstances. Many have been 'locked away' for months at a time, staying safe, which has been right and proper, but with the wonderfully rapid roll out of the vaccine, we know that things will start to change. Some of us are itching to get back to 'normal life', and to you a sense Jesus saying in the coming few weeks, "let me wait with you, take time with me to prepare you".

Conversely, some of us have become used to and settled in as we are 'tucked away' in our homes (our upper rooms). And the outside world does still look rather scary to us. But after a year, the season is slowly coming for us to prepare to go out again. Not in fear, but in freedom. Not just freedom from the fear of Covid, but freedom from all fear, the worst that could happen to Jesus was his death, and even that didn't stop God, so why should anything else hold us captive?

I'm not saying that all of us should rush out the second that the current lockdown ends, we all need to be patient and wise, but many of us have developed a fear or anxiety about going out, and being around people. Our world has, and will always have its risks and uncertainties, but Jesus came to give us 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10), because 'perfect love casts out fear' (1John4:18).

Growing Jesus' Kingdom Together

So this Easter, let's celebrate Jesus' victory over death, His welcoming us back into God's family, and freedom from fear and death. And ask Jesus to meet with us, as he did with the disciples, and prepare us in our waiting, to go out again, and to live in God's freedom, sharing it with others.

Every Blessing - *Bruce*

Information for the coming weeks...

Holy Week.

Palm Sunday services will be at 8am, 9.15am, and the 11.15am on zoom.

(Palm crosses can be collected from outside St Mary's for those who would like to)

Midweek reflections

The year there will be a new 10 minute video released each day on YouTube & the website each morning (Mon-Fri), it can also be watched **at 8am @St Mary's each morning**. It follows Jesus' journey from Gethsemane to grave, using bible readings, reflections, music and art.

Maundy Thursday - Communion service at Christ Church @ 6pm

Good Friday – an hour by the cross – 10am @ Christ Church AND 10am @ St Mary's
(*Journey to the cross – The weekday reflections joined together*)

Easter Day

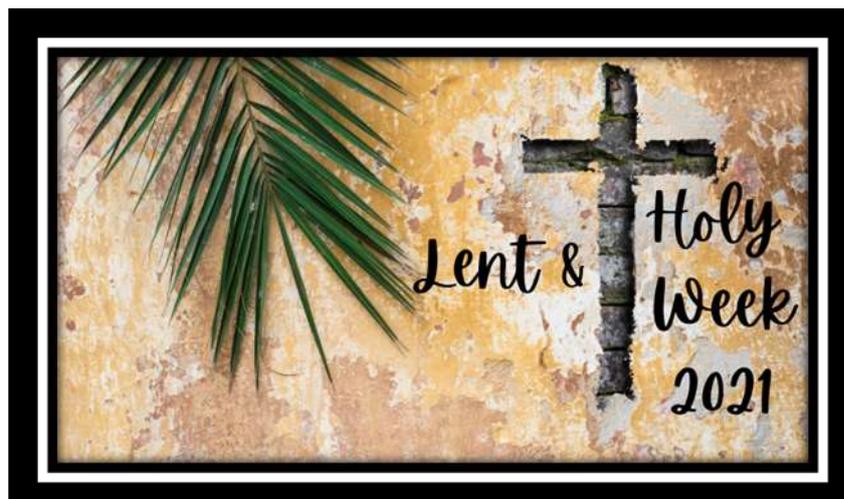
- **8am** Communion service @ St Mary's
- **9.15am** Communion @ Christ Church
- **11.15am** All age Communion @ St Mary's

Sunday 11th April

- **8am** Morning Prayer @ St Mary's
- **9.15am** Morning Worship @ Christ Church
- **11.15am** NO SERVICE

Sunday 18th April

- **8am** Morning Prayer @ St Mary's
- **9.15am** Morning Worship @ Christ Church
- **11.15am** Communion & young church @ St Mary's



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