

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER - 19th April 2020

A short act of worship for use in people's homes while churches are closed,
provided by Mr. Jeff Britt.

Call to worship: (Psalm 16: 8-9a)

I keep my eyes on the Lord.

With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices.

Hymn: Singing the Faith 297 – Christ is alive! Let Christians sing ¹ [Organ](#) or

Christ is alive! Let Christians sing. [Choir and brass version. NB the middle verse is different](#)

The cross stands empty to the sky.

Let streets and homes with praises ring.

Love drowned in death, shall never die.

Christ is alive! No longer bound
to distant years in Palestine,
but saving, healing, here and now,
and touching every place and time.

In every insult, rift and war,
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,
and lives, where even hope has died.

Women and men, in age and youth,
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,
and find the way, the life, the truth,
revealed in Jesus, freed for all.

Christ is alive, and comes to bring
good news to this and every age,
till earth and sky and ocean ring
with joy, with justice, love, and praise.

Brian Wren (b 1936) © 1968 Stainer & Bell Ltd

Prayers of Adoration and Confession:

This Eastertide with joyful voice we'll sing our praise to the Lord.

Lord, I praise you once more for coming into the darkness of this world.

And I come to you this morning to bring you my praise and adoration for all that Easter means;
your death on the cross and resurrection from the tomb which brings eternal life.

And I praise you for appearing to your followers, then and now.

But sometimes Lord, I forget the significance of what you have done for me.

So now I say sorry, and I ask for your forgiveness when doubt creeps in.

Lord, in your mercy, hear my prayer. **Amen.**

Now say the Lord's Prayer slowly and thoughtfully

Gospel Reading: John 20: 19-29 Jesus Appears to His Disciples ²

[Click to hear reading - Play from 2:50 to 4:38](#)

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."

²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

²⁸ Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

²⁹ Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Hymn: Singing the Faith 629 - God of my faith, I offer you my doubt ³ [Organ](#)

God of my faith, I offer you my doubt,
for life at times seems far too dark for me,
and my belief becomes more insecure,
when worldly cares produce uncertainty.

God of my hope, I offer you my fear,
when I am scared by my anxiety,
when all I hear is suffering and woe,
in all my shadows you will walk with me.

God of my joy, I offer you my grief,
when I sink down in sadness or despair,
when in depression I cannot be touched,
I pray in all my depths to find you there.

God of my love, I offer you my pain,
when I'm alone and feel nobody cares,
in aching age or in rejected youth,
you bear my cross and dry my human tears.

God of my life, I offer you my dreams,
light in the darkness where I hide from view,
light in my faith, my hope, my joy and love,
light in my life and all my life in you.

Colin Ferguson (b 1937) © 2008 Ferguson, Colin

Reflection:

We have read from John's gospel the account of Thomas not believing his fellow disciples when they told him Jesus had risen and appeared to them. If you had been Thomas would you have had any doubt in your mind? He said: "unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." He wanted physical evidence of the risen Jesus.

So now we find Thomas with the others again in the locked room, and although the doors are locked, Jesus appears in the room with them. He approaches Thomas and says: "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas replies: "My Lord and my God!" How, I wonder, would we have reacted to Jesus' sudden appearance? This Easter has been a very difficult time for us all. Unable to go to church to worship in our usual way; unable to be with friends and family; feeling anxious and worried about the future; just as the disciples were at that first Easter. But thanks to technology we were able to speak to them on the telephone; use video chats on face book, or use skype to keep in touch with our loved ones. We have also been tuning in to services relayed by Chester Road Baptist Church along with our daughter Jennifer, who is a member there. This gave us a feeling of being together, and although being isolated we were together; worshipping the Lord together and keeping safe.

Jesus' disciples were kept from their normal lives, just as we are. Back in January, if someone had told me that in April we will be in the middle of a pandemic; that we would all be in lockdown and not be allowed out to live our lives in our normal way for fear of the consequences; would I have believed them? Would you have believed them? Would there have been doubt in your mind? When the coronavirus first arrived here, we had no idea of what it would mean for us and our families. But now we are in no doubt. We have physical evidence of what it can do!

Our lives have been turned upside down by what is happening to us now, just as the disciples' lives were turned upside down by what was happening to them. For they were not expecting these things to happen; but take heart, for this time of darkness will pass. In 1 Peter chapter 1 it says in verse 6: "So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while."

So as we go through this time of being isolated, our time of trouble, put your trust in the Lord in this time of darkness, and lockdown, for Jesus is here with us. And as the psalmist writes: "I keep my eyes on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken."

Hymn: Singing the Faith - 487 - You shall go out with joy ⁴ [With vocal backing](#) or [Organ](#)

You shall go out with joy
And be led forth with peace,
And the mountains and the hills
Shall break forth before you.
There'll be shouts of joy,
And the trees of the field
Shall clap, shall clap their hands.
And the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
And the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
And the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
And you'll go out with joy. (Repeat)

Stuart Dauermann (b 1944) and Steffi Geiser Rubin © 1975 Lillenas Publishing Company (Admin. by Music Services, Inc.)

Prayers of intercession:

Risen Lord, at this time of isolation, be with the lonely,
the vulnerable the aged, and their carers.....encircle them in your loving arms
Be with all who have lost loved ones, and
those who are going through times of trialencircle them with your strength.
Be with the hungry and the homelessfeed and shelter them.
We give thanks for those who provide for them.

Be with those who are sick in body or mind.....
and be with the doctors and nurses working so hard to bring healing
encircle all of them with your healing and keep them safe.
May the risen Lord be with us in these uncertain times encircling us all, protecting us in his loving arms. **Amen.**

Blessing:

May the Lord bless you and keep you,
may he make his face to shine upon you
and give you peace. **Amen**

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