

ORDER OF SERVICE – Worship at Home 11/04/21 – Easter 2

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Shared Reading ¹

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!

**It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard,
running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe.**

It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion.

For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life for evermore.

HYMN – SF 2856 ²

I cast my mind to Calvary

Where Jesus bled and died for me.

I see his wounds, his hands, his feet,

My Saviour on that cursed tree.

His body bound and drenched in tears

They laid him down in Joseph's tomb,

The entrance sealed by heavy stone

Messiah still and all alone.

O praise the name of the Lord our God,

O praise his name for evermore.

For endless days we will sing your praise,

O Lord, O Lord our God.

And then on the third at break of dawn,

The Son of heaven rose again.

O trampled death where is your sting?

The angels roar for Christ the King.

O praise the name of the Lord our God,

He shall return in robes of white,

The blazing sun shall pierce the night

And I will rise among the saints,

My gaze transfixed on Jesus' face.

O praise the name of the Lord our God,

O praise his name for evermore.

For endless days we will sing your praise,

For endless days we will sing Your praise

O Lord, O Lord our God.

PRAYER OF ADORATION

We praise you, O Father, for raising to resurrection life your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through his great love, brokenness is healed, hope is restored and life renewed as lives are transformed by his resurrection life and power. His victory over sin and death gives us the confidence to move from mourning to dancing, from sorrow to joy and from despair to hope.

We praise you and adore you, Father, for your grace and love towards us. To you, to Jesus our Lord and the Holy Spirit, be all blessing and honour and glory and praise for ever and ever! **Amen**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

We stand in the presence of God our Father,

knowing we have failed to be the people he calls us to be.

Let us face our faults and commit ourselves to change.

Loving Father, we know that in our daily lives we have failed you.
We have put self-interest before care for others.
We have cared too much about what others think of us and sought their good opinion when we should have acted for Jesus.

Forgive us and help us to love our neighbour as ourselves.

We have set up idols in our lives, caring too much for things, for lifestyle and for ideas.
We have mistrusted and misrepresented your love.
We have forgotten who we are in Christ.

Forgive us and help us to remember our privileges and responsibilities.

We have held on to your message of hope and new life as if it were just for us.
We have been fearful and reticent about telling others about the joy we have found.
We have obscured and hindered the message by our actions, attitudes and words.

Forgive us and help us truly to proclaim the new life of Jesus.

May we know your forgiveness and renewed strength. In Jesus name. **Amen.**

Reading – John 20: 19-23 ¹

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.'

Talk - Part 1

Picture if you can ten frightened, confused yet excited men locked away in a Jerusalem hideaway. There were probably others with them, Mary Magdalene, Jesus' mother and Cleopas and his companion. They were all trying to puzzle it, what a day it had been, a day like no other - an empty tomb, that some of them had seen, the risen Jesus, who some of them had met.

Imagine the conversation. What is happening? What should we do now? Do you remember what Jesus said? If only we had listened more carefully. We have to tell others about this, we owe it to him but where to begin? Then there is the danger, with the body gone what will the authorities do now? Will they accuse us of having stolen it? They stopped at nothing to get rid of Jesus so they certainly aren't going to be too pleased if we start telling everyone he is alive. Jesus had some pretty powerful enemies, they are our enemies now. We had better be careful who we talk to, where we go; better to keep the doors locked, to be wary of strangers who might turn out to be informers.

Into this confused, frightened and excited group Jesus stepped although they did not hear his steps on the stairs or his rap on the door. He simply came and stood among them. One moment he was not there and the next he appeared, that was the only way to describe it. He was among them again, at the centre. All conversation, speculation ceased. He is rightly the centre of attention, at the heart of things as he always was and always now must be.

Jesus does do two things - he sets them the task to which they must now dedicate themselves and he gives them the means to fulfil it. It is the same task he calls us and all his disciples to today and he offers the same means to carry it out.

His gifts to the disciples then and now are firstly his peace and secondly his presence. 'Peace be with you' is not just a friendly greeting. It is not merely a 'Hi, how are you?' Jesus gives his promised peace, peace that later Paul would describe as surpassing, above and beyond human understanding. It is the peace of inner certainty, of sins forgiven, of eternal hope and security. It is the peace of God; the shalom of the Old Testament. It is the rest and stillness of God. It is the serenity of knowing all is well not just temporarily but ultimately, permanently.

With this special peace he offers his presence. He shows them his wounds and he shares his eternal presence, the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Jesus, who is now loosed into the world and into the lives of all believers. We need the same peace and presence don't we?

HYMN – STF 370 – Edwin Hatch (1835-1889)

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| 1. Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what thou dost love,
And do what thou wouldst do. | 3. Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Till I am wholly thine,
Till all this earthly part of me
Glows with thy fire divine. |
| 2. Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Until my heart is pure,
Until with thee I will one will,
To do and to endure. | 4. Breathe on me, Breath of God,
So shall I never die,
But live with thee the perfect life
Of thine eternity. |

Spend some time in quiet now and allow Jesus to meet you, to bless and renew you by his presence within. Settle and rest in the stillness of his holy peace and receive the gentle breath, the still small calming breeze, of the Holy Spirit.

Part 2

We know there was overwhelming joy in that room, quite a party, but Jesus was not there just to start a party but to give them their life's purpose, their raison d'être, their reason for being and ours too. Here are the instructions and the means to carry them out.

'As the Father has sent me, so I send you'. In the same way the Father sent the Son, in the flesh and blood body of Jesus to accomplish the work of salvation, so now in the same way Jesus and his disciples then and now, the body of Christ, the Church are to tell the whole world about it. He sends them to make that salvation real, tangible for all the world. It took Jesus, God the Son, to carry through the work of salvation of the whole world from sin and death and evil. Only he could do it, only he could win the victory, pay the price, stand in our place. Only the power of God's love could do it. The Father sent him with this task, which he finished. 'It is finished', was his cry from the cross. But so few people knew and even fewer understood this once and for all event. How was it to be made known? As the Father sent me so I send you.

Part one is complete, part two is about to begin as Jesus enters a locked room and part two is still proceeding, as Jesus says to us, 'as the Father sent me so I send you'.

What does that look like? If we look at the response of Jesus to what his Father gave him to do we will see how we are to respond to the task Jesus now gives us. Consider Jesus' commitment, dedication and obedience to his Father. Consider how he avoided distraction, the authority with which he spoke and acted - the authority of his Father. Consider the gifts he was given for the task, his Father's blessing and affirmation. Consider the cost and the sacrifice. Well, all of these still apply to the task Jesus continues to give to us. Jesus has done his part, we must do ours.

Now Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit into us as he did in that upper room. Jesus inspires us, enspirits us with new life, the life of his Spirit. For only those filled with the Spirit of Jesus can even begin to do the task of sharing the Good News in the same way that the Father sent his Son. It is impossible without God, but with him all things are possible. Filled with the gift of God's everlasting presence, we are sent by Jesus to tell the world what God has done. We are to speak of how forgiveness is made possible and to warn of the need to forgive others so that we can be forgiven. To explain that as we come in repentance we can receive acceptance from God because of Christ. We can experience hope, purpose and joy. Guilt need not beset us any longer - freedom from bondage to sin and to sinful patterns of behaviour is made possible. What great Good News to share. We are all sent to believe, to live, to share, to show, to speak this Good News which is true only because Jesus is alive and is always with us.

HYMN –STF 306 ³

Now the green blade riseth from the buried grain,
Wheat that in dark earth many days has lain;
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

In the grave they laid him, love whom we had slain
Thinking that never he would wake again,
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

Forth he came at Easter, like the risen grain,
Jesus for three days in the grave had lain,
Quick from the dead, the risen One is seen:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,
Thy touch can call us back to life again,
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:
Love is come again like wheat that springs up green
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

Prayers for others (prepared by Erica Gassor)

Father God, we turn to you now in prayer, thinking of the world in which we live. We think particularly at this time of those areas of your world that are in the midst of war. No sound of birdsong, no sound of the wind blowing gently in the trees, just the sound of gunfire and bombs. Father, be near the people who live in the midst of this fighting. Be near them in their distress and suffering and show them your love. Bring the leaders of the world together to find peaceful solutions to the differences and the problems in place of the fighting and violence and horror.

We pray to you Father for all those who are suffering from malnutrition and starvation in a world which has such plentiful resources. We seem individually to be so helpless and unable to help everyone but we know that turning to you in prayer you can find solutions and teach humankind not to be greedy and selfish but to share the resources that we have. We pray that you will change hearts and minds of those in authority and those with power so that they become more compassionate and caring.

Father we pray for all those who suffer violence on our streets and in towns throughout the world. We think of those who are injured and killed in this needless violence. Draw the victims close to you we ask and bring them peace.

Father God we turn our thoughts now a little nearer to home and to our own area. We think of those who are struggling with unemployment and debt. We pray for those who are suffering from depression and illness and pray that they will feel your warmth and your love will help them overcome their struggles.

Father we pray for all those who are bereaved - those who have lost loved ones due to coronavirus or any disease and we pray in thanks for the wonder of medical science, the caring and the love of those who are involved in looking after those who suffer. There are so many people in this world who are unsung heroes and we bring them to you so that they also know your love in their lives.

We bring to you now Father those in our church family and our own families who are suffering at this time and in a few moments of silence name them in our hearts.....

We know they are very near to you and pray that you will keep each one close to you and bring those who do not yet know you into a realisation of the power and strength that your love gives.

Finally Father God we pray for ourselves that you will give each one of us compassionate, gentle, loving hearts so that we can respond to each need in a loving way, following the example of your son Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen

Lord's Prayer

HYMN – STF 313 Edmond Louis Budry (1854-1932)

translated by Richard Birch Hoyle (1875-1939)

Thine be the glory,
Risen, conquering Son,
Endless is the victory
Thou o'er death hast won;
Angels in bright raiment
Rolled the stone away,
Kept the folded grave-clothes
Where thy body lay:
*Thine be the glory,
Risen, conquering Son;
Endless is the victory
Thou o'er death hast won!*

Lo, Jesus meets us,
Risen from the tomb;
Lovingly he greets us,
Scatters fear and gloom;
Let the Church with gladness
Hymns of triumph sing,
For her Lord now liveth,
Death hath lost its sting:
Thine be the glory,

No more we doubt thee,
Glorious Prince of Life;
Life is naught without thee:
Aid us in our strife;
Make us more than conquerors
Through thy deathless love;
Bring us safe through Jordan
To thy home above:
Thine be the glory,

Final Blessing

Almighty God, we thank you for helping us to worship you in this joyful Easter season. Help us, we pray, to continue in our worship throughout the coming week, by living lives filled with love, both for you, and for all people. And may your blessing, peace and presence be with us and all those we love and pray for now and always. **Amen**

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