

Worship at Home: Ibstock and Heather
4th Sunday of Easter: 21st April 2024

Prayer of preparation

Almighty and everlasting God, we thank you that you have brought us safely to the beginning of this day.
Keep us from falling into sin or running into danger,
order us in all our doings and guide us to do always what is righteous in your sight;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn

Come, people of the risen King,
Who delight to bring Him praise.
Come, all and tune your hearts to sing
To the Morning Star of grace.
From the shifting shadows of the earth
We will lift our eyes to Him,
Where steady arms of mercy reach
To gather children in.

[Refrain] Rejoice! Rejoice! Let every tongue rejoice!
One heart, one voice, O Church of Christ, rejoice!

Come, those whose joy is morning sun
And those weeping through the night.
Come, those who tell of battles won,
And those struggling in the fight.
For His perfect love will never change,
And His mercies never cease,
But follow us through all our days
With the certain hope of peace.

Refrain

Come, young and old from every land,
Men and women of the faith.
Come, those with full or empty hands,
Find the riches of His grace.
Over all the world His people sing,
Shore to shore we hear them call;
The Truth that cries through every age:
'Our God is all in all'.

Refrain

*Keith Getty, Kristyn Getty
and Stuart Townend (2007)*

Prayer of confession:

Most merciful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
We confess that we have sinned in thought, word and deed.
We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
In your mercy forgive what we have been,
Help us to amend what we are,
And direct what we shall be; that we may do justly, love
mercy, and walk humbly with you, our God. Amen.

Reminder of God's promise of forgiveness

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life
in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23

Bible readings

Old Testament: Isaiah 55:1-13

55 “Come, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and he who has no money,
come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.

² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labour for that which does not satisfy?

Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.

³ Incline your ear, and come to me;
hear, that your soul may live;
and I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
my steadfast, sure love for David.

⁴ Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples,
a leader and commander for the peoples.

⁵ Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know,
and a nation that did not know you shall run to you,
because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel,
for he has glorified you.

⁶ “Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;

⁷ let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on
him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.

⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.
¹⁰ “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
¹¹ so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.
¹² “For you shall go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall break forth into singing,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
¹³ Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;
and it shall make a name for the LORD,
an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

New Testament: Luke 24:36-49

³⁶ While they [the disciples] were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’

³⁷ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. ³⁸ He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.’

⁴⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹ And while they still did not believe it because of joy and

amazement, he asked them, 'Do you have anything here to eat?' ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate it in their presence.

⁴⁴ He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.'

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, 'This is what is written: the Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'

Reflections and thoughts from Andy Hartropp on these Bible readings:

The risen Jesus gives us assurance and a commission

- Our New Testament reading today begins in v36 of Luke chapter 24. Luke 24 is a marvellous chapter: Luke's account of that first Easter Day. At the start of that chapter, we read that the tomb where Jesus has been buried was empty! An angel declared that Jesus 'has risen'!
- A little later that day, a follower of Jesus, named Cleopas, along with his unnamed companion, walked from Jerusalem to a village called Emmaus, about 7 miles away. They were very downcast – because of all that had happened in Jerusalem to Jesus of Nazareth. As they walked, this same Jesus came up and walked along with

them – but, initially at least, they were kept from recognising him.

- Jesus then said to them: ‘Did not the Christ have to suffer all 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’ (vv26-27).
- Then the three of them entered the village, and they sat down for a meal. Amazingly, as Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke the bread and gave it to Cleopas and his companion, their eyes were opened, and they recognised him! But then he disappeared from them!
- Cleopas and his companion then went straight back to Jerusalem, 7 miles away. They found the Eleven apostles and some other followers of Jesus; and they told what had happened on their way to Emmaus, and how they had met with Jesus.
- Today’s passage takes up the story, in v36. Jesus speaks words that address the needs of his followers. By this he brings them great assurance. Jesus speaks *peace* – to overcome their fears. ‘Peace be with you’, he says (v36).
- Jesus speaks about the *evidence* – evidence to resolve their troubles and doubts. His words point his followers to the evidence of his new resurrection body. ‘Look at my hands and my feet...Touch me and see’ (v39). He ate food in their presence: and he told them the significance of all this – not a ghost, but risen!
- Jesus speaks of his *presence* – to confirm their joy and amazement. ‘It is I myself’ (v39).

- Can you see how the words of Jesus meet their deep needs? Peace, evidence, and his presence. Jesus gives great assurance to his followers.
- How wonderful it is that his words are written down for us in the Bible, God's written word. As we read and hear these words, God speaks these same words to us today. Do you have fears? Let the words of Jesus Christ bring you peace and assurance.
- Do you have doubts and troubles about whether or not Jesus really rose from the dead? Then let the eye-witness evidence, recorded in the gospels, resolve your doubts, and assure you of the solid basis for believing that Jesus is indeed risen.
- Perhaps you are joyful, and yet also sometimes overcome with amazement? Let the words of Jesus remind you of his presence. 'It is I myself!'. And this Jesus promised also (in Matt.28:19): 'I am with you always'. His words and his presence give us confirmation, a firm foundation, and strength. Jesus desires to give us great assurance.
- But his words do even more than that. Look at verses 44-49. Jesus *teaches* his followers. In v44 he says [READ]. And so (v45), 'he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures'.
- In vv46-49 we have Luke's summary of what Jesus said to his apostles and followers that evening on the first Easter day. Verse 46 is the core of the Christian gospel: 'This is what is written: the Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day.'

- Then Jesus *commissions* his followers (v47): ‘and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.’
- Here Jesus gives his followers a *commission*: and he tells them his *plan and programme*. Repentance and forgiveness of sins ‘in his name’: that is, ‘in him’, ‘by his power’. And this is to be preached ‘to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem’. Friends, this has actually happened! This message has been conveyed to many, many nations across the world. It came to the UK centuries ago! It is still going out to more and more nations, to those who have not yet heard.
- Verse 48: The apostles were the first *witnesses*: they were eye-witnesses. Jesus commissions his followers to go and fulfil his plan and programme – and we, his followers today, are to do the same. Some of us aren’t in a position to go anywhere, physically. But we can still pray, and encourage and support others. We are the body of Christ.
- Let us take time to receive afresh from Jesus his *assurance* and his *commission*. Amen.

The Apostles’ Creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen

In our prayers of intercession, let us remember:

- The conflicts in Ukraine, and in Israel and Palestine.
- Our nation and all nations; all those who are in authority and positions of responsibility.
- King Charles III and all the Royal Family.
- The needs of our local community and neighbours.
- Our churches in our life and gospel mission.
- Christians and churches who face persecution.
- People in our church family who are in need.
- Personal requests and thanksgivings.

Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Easter

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life: Raise us, who trust in him, from the death of sin into the life of righteousness, that we may seek those things which are above, where he lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn [same tune as for "The church's one foundation..."]

Facing a task unfinished
That drives us to our knees:
A need that, undiminished
Rebukes our slothful ease.
We, who rejoice to know Thee
Renew before Thy throne
The solemn pledge we owe Thee
To go and make Thee known.

Where other lords beside Thee
Hold their unhindered sway.
Where forces that defied Thee
Defy Thee still today.
With none to heed their crying
For life, and love, and light.
Unnumbered souls are dying
And pass into the night.

We bear the torch that, flaming,
Fell from the hands of those
Who gave their lives proclaiming
That Jesus died and rose.
Ours is the same commission;
The same glad message ours.
Fired by the same ambition
To Thee we yield our powers.

O Father who sustained them;
O Spirit who inspired;
Saviour, whose love constrained them
To toil with zeal untired.
From cowardice defend us;
From lethargy awake!
Forth on Thine errands send us
To labour for Thy sake.

Frank Houghton (1894-1972)

The Grace

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all evermore. Amen

