



19 April 2020

EASTER 2

Hear the Gospel

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

John 20:18-22

Peace be with you.

Within this peace is the gift of the risen Christ.

The wounds of death and life are now forever in the heart of God. They are coloured by Christ's passion and meet us in our individual faith and call us to move beyond individual belief to the faith that grows and is shared within community. Now we walk into a new future accompanied forever by the good news of Easter. So be with us now, Lord Jesus Christ. Take us past the barriers of anxiety and doubt which lie within us and show us the truth of your living presence, the truth beyond mere human reason and questioning understanding, the truth of God's love and wisdom even in a traumatised and suffering world.

Hymn 409 O breath of life, come sweeping through us,
revive your church with life and power;
O breath of life, come cleanse, renew us,
and fit your church to meet this hour.

O wind of God, come bend us, break us,
till humbly we confess our need;
then in your tenderness remake us,
revive, restore; for this we plead.

O breath of love, come breathe within us,
renewing thought and will and heart;
come, love of Christ, afresh to win us,
revive your church in every part.

***So, may we know You and hear You calling
us by name into Your living presence now.
For Christ is risen!***

Thanks be to God.

Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So, the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

John 20:24-28

There was joy in that upper room where the disciples gathered.

The crushing despair had lifted and the sense of new life in their crucified Lord was now seizing them with a passion of expectation.

There was the enlivening of a sense of faith transcending the horrors of the crucifixion such that even the last vestiges of negativity were losing credence as Thomas burst out with the ultimate words of affirmation.

“My Lord and my God”.

Life, not death was in control and the focus for the new future ahead of them: a future to be lived in concert with a risen Lord.

There was an all-embracing peace settling on all in that room.

Hymn 372 Jesus lives! your terrors now
 can, O death, no more appal us;
 Jesus lives! By this we know
 now the grave cannot enthrall us. *Hallelujah!*

Jesus lives! Our hearts know well
naught from us his love shall sever:
fame or hurt or powers of hell
tear us from his keeping never. *Hallelujah!*

Jesus lives! Henceforth is death
not for us a gloomy portal
when we take our final breath,
but the gate to life immortal. *Hallelujah!*

Reflection

Christ is always saying to us “Peace be with you”. And yet, for some of the time at least, we refuse to hear and receive his final word. Like the disciples of the upper room we withdraw behind the locked doors of our timid lives, fearful of facing things which would confront our perceived realities. We are like Thomas, brazenly demanding a God whose presence and action meets the parameters we would set for God’s action and unable to open our eyes to the revelation of the world of faith let alone live within its boundless dimensions beyond our unimaginative realities and life expanding dimensions. Yet God was in Christ and his resurrection and in choosing to be this expression of humanity Jesus’ bleeding wounds are not just proofs that Jesus was risen but testimony to a God in Christ who has felt all that the world and human life can experience and is identified with all Creation.

We who are the community of faith must now assert ourselves and lead the way.

For we are the people of resurrection.

Hymn 380 'Yours be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory over death you've won;
angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave-clothes, where your body lay.

*Yours be the glory, risen, conquering Son
endless is the victory over death you've won.*

See, 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 the Lord is living, death has lost its sting

*Yours be the glory, risen, conquering Son
endless is the victory over death you've won.*

No more we doubt you, glorious Prince of life;
life is naught without you: aid us in our strife;
make us more than conquerors through your
deathless love;
bring us safely through Jordan to your home above.

*Yours be the glory, risen, conquering
endless is the victory over death you've won.*

Prayer of Commitment

In Jesus we will find the means to bring our dreams to reality.

***For Christ lives! He stands over against those who can only predict
doom and destruction.***

In Jesus we will see the sun break through all clouds of defeat and
uncertainty.

For Christ lives! He the rock-steady marker in the shifting sands of life.

In Jesus we will find the values that count and the firm basis for a faith
community.

***For Christ lives! The strong token of your enduring love, Most
Gracious God.***

In Jesus, the best aspirations of leaders, and prophets, of the wise and
the holy come, together and prove that Your Love and Grace is
effective beyond all the measures of human limitation.

Commissioning and Benediction

Go as those who have seen Christ afresh.

Go into the world to live in the power and freedom of resurrection life.
And may the presence of Christ rise before us with outstretched hands
of love,

may the Holy Spirit breathe healing grace into our wounded places;
and may God the Creator renew our faith when the questions of life as
we must live it threaten to overwhelm us.

Amen

Rev. Graeme Kerr