

26th April The Way of Light Week 2

In places of darkness and in the fullness of light

Christ is risen

In times of doubt and in strength of faith

Christ is risen

In our pain and in our joy

Christ is risen

The Lord is risen

He is risen indeed! Hallelujah

STF 313

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,
risen, conquering Son, endless is the victory thou
o'er death hast won.*

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,
risen, conquering Son, endless is the victory thou
o'er death hast won.*

Edmond Budry (1854–1932)
translated by Richard Birch Hoyle (1875–1939)

Let us pray:

In the chaos before anything was, Lord, you spoke bringing life in abundance.

We praise and adore you, God of life

In the darkness of an early morning garden and the dank coldness of death and the tomb, Lord, you spoke bringing resurrection, defeating death and giving us abundant life

We praise and adore you, God of Life

In the dark places of our lives, Lord, you speak and bring recreation transformation and calling us to life in abundance

We praise and adore you, God of Life

God of abundant life, you have called us to be your people and to walk in your way but there are times when we wander away, when we close our ears to your call and our eyes to your life. We remember those times before you. Take all we have been and done and all we have left undone and transform it through your love and grace.

Open our ears to your words of forgiveness and our eyes to your glory.

May we hear the words “Your sins are forgiven” and know their truth. Amen

Read John 20:19-23

Reflection

Although we are two Sunday's into the Easter season, the reading we have for today, happened very close to the time of last week's reading and the time that Jesus' tomb had been discovered empty.

The disciples are afraid of the authorities and have bolted the doors. Not everyone is there as we will discover next week, but they have still decided to meet. This meeting though would have been very different from the other occasions, they are now faced with each other and the reality that Jesus is no longer among them. Their usual pattern has been thrown out of the window and the challenge of what should they do now.

Their challenge is similar to that of the Church now. During these days of isolation and social distancing, what do we do now? Do we just wait until everything goes back to 'normal' do we just suspend our faith until we can be in a building together? There were those amongst the disciples who probably thought that 'yes' was the answer. Fear can cripple us, make us uncertain of things that were certainties in our lives, as well as making us look at the reason we held those beliefs.

Into this room that was full of doubt, fear and emotional tension, Jesus appears. He begins with bringing peace. Peace. Stop panicking, breathe, calm down and remember why we are here. God sent Jesus, so Jesus is sending them. Not to be Jesus, but to be themselves, to tell the story that they know, with the coaching that Jesus has been giving them. He doesn't want them to blame those who betrayed him or sent him to be crucified. God's love is greater than all that. He wants them to bring even to those who had a part to play in Jesus'

death, the message of hope, of the resurrected Christ. We can do this too! Even though we can't meet in person, we can together experience Christ breaking into our fears, for there is no lock that can keep God out. So let's be brave and do what we have been called to do, to be God's people and to spread the message of hope.

Let us pray:

Into the closed doors of this world come, Lord, and speak your word of peace and life
We pray for all those who are afraid at this time.

We pray for all those who are ill and for those who yearn for their health.

We pray for those who are homeless and for those who struggle to feed themselves and their families.

We pray for those who have lost their incomes or whose businesses are at risk.

We pray for all those who offer care during this crisis often putting their lives at risk to do so.

We pray for our government and all the governments of the world, for business leaders and all who hold any power.

We pray for those who feel voiceless and powerless.

We pray for those situations that no longer make the headlines for those suffering from conflicts, war and oppression, for those seeking refuge and those who have no place of safety.

The Lord's Prayer

May the light of the resurrection shine on your way

May the peace of the resurrection hold you fast

And may the abundant life of the resurrection fill you and empower you

And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you and remain with you always. Amen

26th April

May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

As you walk, look for the signs of community around you.

- How is it displayed?
- Is there more than one type of community visible? And what are they?

Read John 20:19-23

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

The disciples were gathered behind locked doors because they were afraid. Most of them were there, meeting possibly as they had done when Jesus was with them, but this time things were different. They didn't have the one person who connected all of these people from their different backgrounds, as the leader. He was gone and although there were reports of Jesus being seen, the emotions of what had just taken place, probably made it hard to believe.

However, communities do not rely on one person, Jesus had brought the disciples together, given them the tools to continue what he had started. They were to continue Jesus' work. When things change we can often feel adrift, happier to hide and hope someone else leads the way. Jesus in his resurrected form comes to them in their fear and brings them peace. He reminds them of all that they have heard from Jesus and gives them the gift of the Spirit to make them secure in their faith.

- What communities are you apart of? What does it mean to be in a community?
- How do you respond to the idea of a Christian community being scarred and scared people, without regard to gender, status or achievement?
- I wonder, how you might encourage others who are feel afraid and hide themselves away?

Take time to consider those locks that keep others out or keep you in. As you think about them, talk to God. Ask God to help you consider which locks can be opened and amidst it all pray for yourself that no lock will ever keep God out.

Activity

The Upper Room:

The disciples locked themselves away for fear of the authorities. Imagine what might have been going through their minds. They may have been thinking about some of teachings of Jesus, or some of the miracles that were performed.

See how many stories of Jesus you remember, perhaps make a note of them. Can you find them in the Bible? Were they the same as you remember? Which ones encourage you today?