

Worship Outline including Reflection for the Third Sunday of Easter

Opening Verse of Scripture Psalm 30.1-4

I will exalt you, O LORD, for you lifted me out of the depths and did not let my enemies gloat over me. O LORD my God, I called to you for help and you healed me. O LORD, you brought me up from the grave; you spared me from going down into the pit. Sing to the LORD, you saints of his; praise his holy name.

Collect: Prayer for the Day

Risen Christ, you filled your disciples with boldness and fresh hope: strengthen us to proclaim your risen life and fill us with your peace, to the glory of God the Father.

First Reading: Acts 3.12-19

When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, 'You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you. 'And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out.

Second Reading: 1 John 3.1-7

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

Gospel Reading: Luke 24.36-48

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, 'Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself.

Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.’ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, ‘Have you anything here to eat?’ They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence. Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

Reflection

Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’

Our gospel reading this weekend sets out to show that Jesus really had been raised from the dead. He wasn’t a ghost or apparition, or a figment of the disciples wishful thinking, or a revived corpse. He was really there. He answers their fears by saying “Peace be with you”, and answers their continuing doubts by eating fish in front of them. This shows the reality of the eye witnesses and their testimony; the women had seen his burial and the empty tomb. But the disciples don’t believe them, needing more certain evidence, and they still need convincing even after his appearance to Peter. But Jesus showed that he was the very person with whom they had walked and talked from those early days in Galilee (Acts 13: 30 – 32).

And really the chief thing for the disciples is that Jesus came back. After all, nothing had made sense for 48 hours of chaos and seeming despair. Then he is there – offering the gift of peace as did during his ministry. In John 14:27 he says “Peace I leave you with. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid”. And after the resurrection there is same message of peace to the two Marys in Matthew 28:10, and to the disciples in John 20: 19 and 21. There is a collect that describes the peace Jesus offers as “something that the world cannot give”. People discover this. Ecclesiastes describes the search with pleasure, work, wealth and wisdom all failing to deliver. Someone once said that peace came when a purpose that has slipped out of life gets back in. That was certainly true for the disciples. After all, what were they going to do with Jesus dead? Back to fishing?

Now it was almost too good to be true – though the Interpreters Bible suggests that too good not to be true fits God’s world better, because resurrection blew apart the apparent fact of Jesus’ death. God’s will is not thwarted by Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod or the Good Friday crowd. Evil is dislodged by the good. It really

can be. So we ought to go on praying for the coming of God's Kingdom and the doing of His will here on earth as in heaven. The Interpreters Bible speaks of the ordinary being transformed: Christmas comes out of a stable; the Son of God out of a little village; and 20 centuries of Christianity out of a grave. Psalm 4:8 says "You alone, O Lord make me dwell in safety". It is true to say that "what God had always planned came to birth in Bethlehem, to fulfilment on Calvary, to victory at the Resurrection, to exultation at Ascension and is even now coming to consummation.")

Tom Wright links this to repentance and forgiveness that the disciples were to proclaim to all nations. He says that the Bible always envisages that when God finally fulfils all the promises made to Abraham, Moses and the Prophets the whole world would be brought into the embrace of God's saving and heavenly love. Repentance and faith are vital for us as individuals. We become Christians as we let God turn our lives around – as he cleanses us from sin and all that is wrong and gives us His forgiveness. We are 'new creations' as the song says. But Tom Wright asserts that repentance and forgiveness go much further, and can change a world that is polarised and full of disputes.

Condemnation has to go out of the window. There needs to be an honest reset – a fresh start. And the Easter message "Christ is Risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia" is really one of praise. All can be changed. There is new hope. Jesus dying and rising again ensures that miracles will go on happening. Light has overcome darkness. Death is defeated, making all the difference in the world – for us too as we share in God's Kingdom. Amen.

Post Communion Prayer

Living God, your Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread: open the eyes of our faith, that we may see him in all his redeeming work; who is alive and reigns, now and for ever. Amen.