

Ripon & Lower Dales Methodist Circuit

Worship at Home

15th May 2022

Easter 5

What next?

It has been wonderful to celebrate Easter properly this year, after two years of Covid restrictions. I really enjoyed being able to attend a Lent Bible Study group in person, and share Holy Week services with our Ecumenical friends at Bedale. The Witness Walk on Good Friday was well attended and seemed to have townsfolk watching, instead of hurrying by!

Our Easter Sunday Café service, although perhaps not to everyone's taste, had us gathered around an empty cross, seated at tables, sharing food and drink and declaring Christ is risen, reminiscent of the Disciples sharing breakfast by the Sea of Galilee with Jesus.

It has been a joyful Easter. But, the News has made us aware of the Orthodox Church Easter celebrations – and I expect, like me, you don't often think about the Eastern Church much. Their Easter was later than ours, and more difficult to be joyful about. How do you celebrate new life in the risen Christ, when your present life sees you living in a Ukrainian war zone, or your nation helping to support refugees as in Poland.

We see Spring lambs, colourful daffodils and green trees to help us delight in a new creation. How do you do that when hiding underground in a bombed out city?

Perhaps their Call to Worship today, could be this one...

All around new life is emerging,
Though we may not see it yet.

All around us, God makes things new.

Let us open our eyes and see –
See the new things God is doing,
let us see God at work in and among us.
Amen

Hymn (StF) 51 Great is thy faithfulness

- 1 Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
there is no shadow of turning with thee ;
thou changest not, thy compassions, they
fail not ;
as thou hast been thou for ever wilt be :
*Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy
faithfulness !
Morning by morning new mercies I see ;
all I have needed thy hand hath provided.
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.*
- 2 Summer and winter, and springtime and
harvest,
sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love :
- 3 Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
thine own dear presence to cheer and to
guide ;
strength for today and bright hope for
tomorrow,
blessings all mine, with ten thousand
beside !

Thomas O, Chisholm

Prayers of Praise and Confession

Lord of the heavens and the earth,
Lord of all creatures above and below
ground,
Lord of all oceans, the wind, rain and sun;
Lord of everything, your glory and majesty
is supreme.

Lord of our yesterdays, written in our
world history,
Lord of what is to come, the story untold,
Lord of our now, your presence among us;
Lord of everything, your glory and majesty
is supreme.

Thank you, Lord, for being with us at our
beginning,
For being with us at our journey's end,
And for being with us today.
Thank you for good relationships with
family and friends,

And for being with us through our joys
and our sorrows.
Thank you for sharing our fears and our
tears,
For your words are trustworthy and true,
And your promises give us hope for
tomorrow.

Lord, you gave a commandment to love
one another.
You loved your disciples, and you love us
today.
You will continue to love into eternity.
Help us to live as you desire us to,
by sharing your word and sharing your
love with one another.

We are sorry when we fail to live up to
that expectation,
Forgive us when we say hurtful things to
one another, when we cause someone to
feel pain by our insensitive words or
actions. Help us to speak and show your
love into the future.
Help us to live out your words in our lives
today,
For we know you love us, even with all our
flaws.
You assure us of forgiveness, because
your Son, our Saviour Jesus, has wiped the
slate clean and new beginnings beckon.
Praise be to our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

355 Jesus, lover of my soul

- 1 Jesus, lover of my soul,
let me to thy bosom fly,
while the nearer waters roll,
while the tempest still is high ;
hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
till the storm of life is past ;
safe into the haven guide,
O receive my soul at last !
- 2 Other refuge have I none,
hangs my helpless soul on thee ;
leave, ah, leave me not alone,
still support and comfort me.
All my trust on thee is stayed,
all my help from thee I bring ;
cover my defenceless head
with the shadow of thy wing.

3 Thou, O Christ, art all I want ;
more than all in thee I find ;
raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
heal the sick, and lead the blind.
Just and holy is thy name,
I am all unrighteousness ;
false and full of sin I am,
thou art full of truth and grace.

4 Plenteous grace with thee is found,
grace to cover all my sin ;
let the healing streams abound,
make and keep me pure within.
Thou of life the fountain art ;
freely let me take of thee ;
spring thou up within my heart,
rise to all eternity.

Charles Wesley

After the resurrection of Jesus, and his appearances to his disciples – in the Upper Room - first where Thomas is missing then second when he's there, followed by their picnic breakfast of bread and fish with Jesus on the shore of Galilee, you would expect them to be full of joy because their Lord has risen. But during those first few weeks, they are in a state of limbo, they are between the time of Easter and Pentecost, so do not have the knowledge that we do, that very soon they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and then be empowered to continue Christ's work on earth. They are spending a lot of time together, reflecting on what Jesus taught, and no doubt finding some comfort in words he said.

They will recall how at the Last Supper, after Judas left to betray Jesus, he told them to "Love one another, as I have loved you" (John13:31-35). When times are difficult we do support one another in love. The disciples would be have doing that, just as we do today when friends and family are going through difficult circumstances and can't see the way ahead and wonder "What next". We do it when we support charities helping those in need, so that they may see a better "what next" for them.

Those living in war zones, or areas of extreme poverty, do try to support one another through those hard times. But it is not always easy, is it? We need a hope for the future, to know that what is coming next is going to be better. After the trauma of living through a pandemic, now a global financial crisis and a worrying conflict between Ukraine and Russia, we too need a hope that what is coming next is going to be better.

The Bible, fortunately, is full of such hope. We have a faithful, loving God, who created us in his image and sent His son, Jesus, to show us how to be faithful and loving too. Through the Cross we are restored as that image of God and given the command to demonstrate that love we have received by loving each other, and through that we are promised eternal life in Christ.

We hear now, of one such promise to us.

Bible Reading Revelation 21:1-6

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

⁶ He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life."

This is John's vision of "What next?" and picks up on words of prophesy from Isaiah.

Isiah 65:17

See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered nor will they come to mind.

25:6-8

On this mountain he'll prepare a feast for all peoples ... the Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces.

There is to be a new Jerusalem, a new place where God will live among his people. Instead of us travelling to Him – as the Old Testament followers went to the city to worship, God will be among us once more, as He was on the Exodus journey. And this time there will be no tears, no death, no pain, no sorrow.

What we need to realise, is that we get glimpses of this city, this new kingdom now. The central reality of this future kingdom is seen in Jesus – who lived and died and rose again to reign in glory in that kingdom. But we, who follow the Lamb, the King, Jesus, already belong in that city, and have been granted the 'Freedom of the City'.

Because, the Lamb is the one who was, and is and is to come, and we, the followers living today, matter. Our lives need to show, through our worship and work that we are seeking to bring that future kingdom into our present world. Our task/work is to follow Jesus to that holy city, but also to rebuild the city where we are, so that others can see God's kingdom come, just as we pray - Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven'.

The eternal God, Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end of all things, the Word that brought everything into being, will complete his creation and make all things new. Now that is something to have hope in.

But it does still leave the question - What next?

How will you show God's kingdom is here today?

Hymn We seek your Kingdom

Sung to the tune Eventide, "Abide with me"

We seek your kingdom throughout every sphere,
We long for heaven's demonstration here,
Jesus your light shine bright for all to see,
Transform, revive and heal society.

Before all things, in him all things were made,
Inspiring culture, media and trade,
May all our work serve your economy,
Transform, revive and heal society.

Peace, truth and justice reigning everywhere,
With us be present in our public square,
Fill all who lead with your integrity,
Transform, revive and heal society.

Forgive us Lord when we have not engaged.
Failing to scribe your heart on history's page,
Make us again what we were meant to be,
Transform, revive and heal society.

Faithful to govern, ever may be,
Faithful in service, loving constantly,
In everything may your authority,
Transform, revive and heal society.

Noel Robinson, Andy Flanagan, Graham Hunter

Prayers for Others

We pray, dear God,
for places where there is division and for all countries in the grip of war...
may your Holy Spirit bring peace;

We pray for countries where there is religious persecution...
may your Holy Spirit bring unity;

We pray for towns and cities where gang warfare brings fear...
may your Holy Spirit bring hope;

We pray for communities where there is inequality...
may your Holy Spirit bring dignity;

We pray for workplaces where there is insecurity...
may your Holy Spirit bring confidence;

We pray for homes where there is brokenness...
may your Holy Spirit bring healing;

We pray for churches where there is a desire to reach out to their community and beyond...
may your holy Spirit bring life to your glory.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name,
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
For ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn 705 It is God who holds the nations

1 It is God who holds the nations in the hollow of his hand ;
it is God whose light is shining in the darkness of the land ;
it is God who builds the City on the Rock

and not on sand :
may the living God be praised !

2 It is God whose purpose summons us to
use the present hour ;
who recalls us to our senses when a
nation's life turns sour ;
in the discipline of freedom we shall
know God's saving power :
may the living God be praised !

3 When a thankful nation, looking back,
has cause to celebrate
those who win our admiration by their
service to the state ;
when self-giving is a measure of the
greatness of the great :
may the living God be praised !

4 God reminds us every sunrise that the
world is ours on lease :
for the sake of life tomorrow may our
love for it increase ;
may all races live together, share its
riches, be at peace :
may the living God be praised !

Fred Pratt Green

Blessing

Glorious God, you shine your light into the
dark places of our lives and the world.
Gentle God, you touch us with your healing
love and make us whole.
Bless us this week
and shine through us this week
and use us to bring hope and healing to
others. Amen.

Kathy Lowrie