

W&R FULL SERVICE (B&DMC) SUNDAY 18 APRIL 2021 (EASTER 3)

Welcome/Intro

Shalom! To everyone who is joining us today from Bedale & District, the Circuit and wider afield. This is the 3rd Sunday in Easter but we shall still be looking at the immediate times following the resurrection when Christ appears to his disciples in a locked room using Luke's version of events.

Call to worship - please feel free to join in with the words in bold type

Come trust in the Creator,
who transforms our distress and anger
with silence and searching.

**We meet in the light of a new day,
welcoming the Word of God.**

The Presence of heaven brings peace to this
space and time

**and our hearts and minds awaken for
heaven's purpose to be revealed.
Amen.**

And we sing a hymn that reflects the glories
of the day of resurrection

**Hymn STF 309 See what a
morning, gloriously bright**

1 See, what a morning, gloriously bright,
with the dawning of hope in Jerusalem;
folded the graveclothes, tomb filled with
light,
as the angels announce Christ is risen!
See God's salvation plan,
wrought in love, borne in pain, paid in
sacrifice,
fulfilled in Christ, the Man,
for he lives: Christ is risen from the dead!

2 See Mary weeping, 'Where is he laid?'
as in sorrow she turns from the empty
tomb;
hears a voice speaking, calling her name;
it's the Master, the Lord raised to life again!
The voice that spans the years,
speaking life, stirring hope, bringing peace
to us,
will sound till he appears,
for he lives: Christ is risen from the dead!

3 One with the Father, Ancient of Days,
through the Spirit who clothes faith with
certainty;

honour and blessing, glory and praise
to the King crowned with power and
authority!

And we are raised with him,
death is dead, love has won, Christ has
conquered;
and we shall reign with him,
for he lives: Christ is risen from the dead!

Stuart Townend (b. 1963) and Keith Getty (b.
1974)

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<tym@kingsway.co.uk>

Prayers Of Praise

Stepping into the turmoil of life,
You bring peace, Risen presence.
Your calm voice chases away the darkness
and distress
of doubt and fear, bringing new light and
insight to life and death.

In an upper room,
You make the extraordinary experience of
resurrection an everyday encounter,
and in the passage of all living things
through birth, growth and death, we notice
the possibility of new beginnings.
Your words of peace still our hurry.
Your story is to be savoured, to fill
imagination, to dream of what is possible.
In the peace Your passion for creation is
revealed, as Your love heals the division
humanity creates
between one another, amidst the world
around us, between heaven and earth.
With Your woundedness we are made
whole, and prepared to be the witnesses
of Christ's continuing purpose in our time.
Amen.

Of Thanksgiving

Our mouths are full of songs of praise, Lord
of life, for You meet our every need.
Our hunger is fed.
Our thirst is quenched.
Your in-dwelling in the whole of life inspires
our thoughts and encourages the gifts
within each of us to be used for the glory of
Your kingdom.
Your risen presence provides the sustenance
our inner spirits crave.
We meet You in the relationships we form,
as You call our hidden skills and talents to

the fore so that they speak of You and Your love for all creation.

In all we do, may we reveal Your presence as we discover old and new ways of being Christ's people.

Amen.

Of Confession

There is a response – when I say "*Lord have mercy,*" your response is "**Christ have mercy.**"

As Your children,
Loving Creator, we are given a place within Your heart.

You know our inner workings and are able to name what is right and wrong in the lives we lead.

Lord have mercy,
Christ have mercy.

As Your children,
we recognise the upset and hurt we cause to those we love the most,
with the harsh words we use and our selfish ambition to live as we would choose.

Lord have mercy,
Christ have mercy.

As Your children,
we are invited to share in the stewardship of creation, and sometimes we fail to care.
Tempted by what is easy to use and readily available, we ignore the need to sustain all of life.

We fail to live in harmony with more than humanity.

Lord have mercy,
Christ have mercy.

As children of God, we are known by You,
and long for your presence to turn us around with forgiveness,
and place our feet upon Christ's path of holiness and love.

Lord have mercy,
Christ have mercy.

Amen.

Reading Luke 24: 36b-48

³⁶ And just as they were telling about it, Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them. "Peace be with you," he said. ³⁷ But the whole group was startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost!

³⁸ "Why are you frightened?" he asked. "Why are your hearts filled with doubt? ³⁹ Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it's really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don't have bodies, as you see that I do." ⁴⁰ As he spoke, he showed them his hands and his feet.

⁴¹ Still they stood there in disbelief, filled with joy and wonder. Then he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he ate it as they watched.

⁴⁴ Then he said, "When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ And he said, "Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. ⁴⁷ It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations,^[a] beginning in Jerusalem: 'There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.' ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of all these things.

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Short talk

In the gospel of Luke this is the 3rd encounter with the risen presence of Jesus and follows on from the Emmaus Road experience. There really is quite a lot happening within this reading. For today I'd like to focus in on 3 thoughts that came to me. Jesus' physical presence, the creating of witnesses, and peace.

Firstly, Jesus is very positive in his actions to dispel any thoughts about being a ghostly apparition – he is physically present in the room. He offers up his wounded hands and feet for the disciples to see and touch. He then eats some grilled fish. Whilst his actions helped to disrupt their doubts and fear they also serve as an affirmation of the physical reality of the resurrection. Jesus' presence confirms that his body is made whole, whilst obviously still able to transform. This acts as an impetus to mission, for those who experience the

presence to share that experience with the world.

The experience of encountering the risen Jesus transforms disciples to be witnesses. If you go into Acts chapter 3 you find Peter and John announcing to the watching crowd they are witnesses to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This Jesus is who the disciples are witnesses to, but not just because of moment in the room with the resurrected body. They have known Hebrew Scriptures since childhood that have now been brought to life in the presence of Jesus here on earth. They are part of the story of God in human history.

And then there's the 3rd point of peace – which I'd like to take a longer look at after the next hymn -:

Hymn STF 707
Make me a channel of your peace.

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love;
where there is injury, your pardon, Lord;
and where there's doubt, true faith in you:

O Master, grant that I may never seek
so much to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope;
where there is darkness, only light;
and where there's sadness, ever joy:

O Master, grant that I may never seek
so much to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved, as to love with all my soul.

Make me a channel of your peace.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
in giving unto all that we receive,
and in dying that we're born to eternal life.

Sebastian Temple (1928-1997) from the Prayer of St Francis

Words and Music: Dedicated to Mrs Frances Tracy. © 1967, OCP Publications, 5536 NE Hassalo, Portland, OR 97213, USA

Sermon

So here we are, back with the disciples, just after the resurrection still discussing the Emmaus Road incident. It would not be unreasonable to say that they were probably physically shaking with fear and wondering what the next few days might bring. They were essentially scared stiff! Then with doors locked, Jesus appears amongst them. The first thing Jesus does is to quell their fear and anxiety by saying "peace be with you". These words, and more specifically peace, are what I want to focus on this morning.

I opened the service today with the word "shalom", which is the Aramaic equivalent, that Jesus would have used, of the Greek word "eirené" which was used in the original text of Luke.

The author, Cornelius Plantinga, wrote: "The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfilment, delight and is what the Hebrew prophets call "shalom". In the Bible, shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness and delight – a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Saviour opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights. Shalom, in other words, is the way things ought to be."

We call it peace but it means far more than mere peace of mind or a cease-fire between enemies. When I looked into books further, I found that the meaning of "eirené" was: one, peace, quietness, or rest. It can also mean wholeness or peace of mind. A broader meaning can include security, safety and prosperity. This definition of the word makes

a lot more sense when you look at the context of this verse. Within this one line of Scripture, you see Jesus' true heart and his love for the disciples. He knew they were afraid and anxious and he gave them peace.

I would suggest there are at least 3 ways in which Jesus uses this peace to help the disciples. Firstly, to address fear, secondly with challenges that lead to peace and thirdly, to secure you and move you forward.

Jesus uses peace to address fear

In Luke's description, the disciples are in the 1st day of resurrection, still learning of and discussing the incident on the Emmaus Road when Jesus appears amongst them and says those 4 words.

So many times in life we are like the disciples, locked in a room because we are afraid. There are countless situations in life that have the potential to produce fear in your heart. When you are afraid, you do what the disciples did—you lock everything down. Yet Jesus, knowing how you feel, can show up to give you peace in your situation. In fact, he encourages it.

Paul says: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." – Philippians 4:6-7.

Jesus Gives Peace through Challenges

What I find interesting in this story is that they were in a room with a locked door. They weren't looking for, or expecting, Jesus to show up. Yet the locked door did not keep Jesus from finding them. He was purposeful in meeting with them because he had to speak peace into their hearts. So often we think we are the ones that must initiate our pursuit of God, when the opposite is true. Because God loves you, he pursues you. The psalmist reminds you that:

The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

– Psalm 34:18

When you are broken, anxious, worried, or fearful...it is in those moments that God looks to hold you close. Remember, Jesus went through the locked door to give them peace. He will do the same for you. In your moment of greatest fear, greatest challenges, he is waiting to give you peace. This peace not only calms your emotions, peace walks with you through your challenge. This is the type of peace Jesus gives.

Jesus Uses Peace to Move Forward

The peace Jesus gave the disciples was designed to move them from behind the locked doors of fear and into the purpose that Jesus had for them. Jesus' peace is not designed to make you static but to get you moving. He must address the thing that is giving you the greatest fear because chances are it is holding you back. After he deals with that, then it's time to move forward.

Jesus never intended for the disciples to stay behind a locked door. The same way Jesus has no intention for you to stay trapped by your unrest and fear. He will do for you what he did for his disciples. Give you peace which in turn can give you the confidence to move forward.

I hope you are following this, because when I started thinking more around the subject, I thought about what we meant when we shared the peace, passed the peace, blessed each other with the peace. What are we really saying when we wish someone 'peace be with you' or 'the peace of the Lord'?

Hopefully, by now you can see the reasons 'peace be with you' is more than just a platitude. Let me give you one more way to think about it. When you say 'peace be with you' then you are actually saying "Let God's rest, comfort, wholeness, and assurance go with you".

When you are faced with life's anxieties, worries, and cares, Jesus wants to show up to address those anxieties and give you peace. He desires to speak peace over your life. The reason 'peace be with you' is more than a platitude is because it transcends the circumstance *and* settles those out-of-control emotions raging inside of you.

In every area of your life, regardless of what is happening around you let peace be found with you and in you. This is the type of peace that only God can give. It is the type of peace that transcends your understanding and, best of all, this is what Jesus promised.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." – John 14:27

As Jesus intended the disciples to move forward out of their fear, taking the good news out to the Gentiles as well as Jews; then Jesus needs us to break our bonds move out into the world. He will give each of us peace, which in turn can give us the confidence to move forward.

And further relevance for today? Human beings seem to be incredibly adept at getting ourselves into situations, which to say the least, are at times extremely difficult. Far be it from me to bring politics into the situation but what does a government do when it is desperately frightened about a given situation, dare I possibly say a pandemic? When it's really afraid it locks everything and everyone down. I am sure that over the past year there have been many people who have felt that they are in a locked room with nowhere to go. It needs God-given gifts working through scientists to find possible answers – vaccinations, which can start to quell fears and anxieties and, dare I say, to provide peace that passes all understanding and, slowly, very slowly allows us once again to move forward. We created the situation but I'm sure that God never intended us to stay locked-down forever.

While some of you may see that as a somewhat tongue in cheek comment, I cannot but believe that God listened to prayer and pursued actions to give us His rest, comfort, wholeness, and assurance. I believe that God does have a plan for each one of us and if we listen, He is more than willing to go with us in our lives so that we may extol His Kingdom throughout this world carrying and spreading the Good News wherever we are and wherever we travel.

My prayer is that where God finds it necessary, we can use the experience from the past year as a springboard to move forward spreading the gospel of Christ in the certain knowledge that his "peace" goes with us and we can introduce others to that greater dimension of peace in the future.

Amen.

Short prayer

*Lord Jesus,
You promised before you left us that you would give us peace. Help us today to walk*

in the peace that you promised. Let your peace override any of our fears, anxieties, or worries and help us to walk in the stillness and comfort of the rest that comes from your peace. We thank you today for your great peace and we face today knowing that you are with us and so is your peace.

Our Prayers for Others

Risen Christ,
Your living presence is celebrated at city gates and market squares,
by those in need of healing and those who are amazed, in heart and minds.

In moments of wonder and unexpected changes, our senses are disrupted by the extraordinary, so that suddenly we see You standing in our midst, speaking words of peace and inspiring Your world to discover the possibility of the kingdom of heaven in the ordinary of the world.

Help us to enjoy our moments of wonder. In a world where explanation and logic could chip away at faith, may we marvel at the growing knowledge of science, and the wonder it creates from starlit skies to molecules and atoms, giving intimate knowledge of a creation so full of opportunities to delve into discovering more of God.

Thrill us with the mystery of what we are yet to know so that it expands our desire to notice You in unexpected ways and places. In this journey through a pandemic, we give thanks for all those who have offered signs of resurrection in their work and commitments.

We pray for doctors, nurses and support staff
who tirelessly care for those who enter their view,
at times with potential harm to themselves.

We pray for the scientific community
as it continues research and development in care and prevention.

We pray for those who are the recipients of care, and notice the wide range of people whose health has been affected by being unable to receive treatment and support.

Help us to recognise that while the virus has world-wide impact,
we are not equal in immunisation programmes.

Help us to notice those communities who will be the last to receive the support they need and to work towards the fairer share of wealth and resource,
so that Your risen Presence reveals the kingdom in every land.

Christ of life and death and resurrection,
we celebrate those who have shared this life with us,
allowing us to meet you in simple words and actions.

We grieve with those who mourn the death of loved ones.
May we be those who share the memories and love
that allows hope to rise from loss.

In the name of Jesus Christ,
Your risen One.
Amen.

And together we say the prayer that Jesus taught us, using the modern format:

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.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory
are yours,
now and for ever. **Amen.**

Final hymn STF 306 Now the green blade rises

Now the green blade rises from the buried grain,
wheat that in the dark earth many days has lain;
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.

In the grave they laid him, Love who had been slain,
thinking that he never would awake again,
laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.

Forth he came at Easter, like the risen grain,
he that for the three days in the grave had lain,
quick from the dead my risen Lord is seen:
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.

When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,
then your touch can call us back to life again,
fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:
Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.

John Macleod Campbell Crum (1872-1958)
(alt.)

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Oxford University Press.

Blessing

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us now and evermore.

Amen.

I leave you with:

The Northumbrian blessing.

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you,
wherever He may send you.
May He guide you through the wilderness,
protect you through the storm.
May He bring you home rejoicing
at the wonders He has shown you.
May He bring you home rejoicing
once again into our doors.

~ from the **Northumbria Community** website. <http://www.northumbriacommunity.org/offices/morning-prayer>