

Morning Worship and Spiritual Communion

Third Sunday of Easter 26 April 2020

On the road to Emmaus

Opening prayer

We do not see!
We do not understand!
We do not know which signs are true!

Jesus says: Peace be with you.

We cannot believe!
We cannot find our grounding!
We cannot discern the path forward!

Jesus says: Peace be with you.

Information is lacking!
Too many liars claim expertise!
Conspiracy theories confuse our spirits!

Jesus says: Peace be with you.

(from Revgalsblogpals.org)

We seek forgiveness

Christ Jesus, in the light of your risen presence,
and in union with your first frail apostles, we say sorry:
For not weighing your words,
For not sharing your trials,
For not believing your promises.

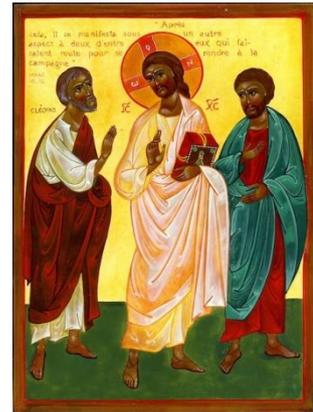
Risen Christ, be in what we do, inform what we say, redeem who we are. Amen

Alternative collect for the Third Sunday of Easter.

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. Amen.

You now may like to use this link to hear the Choir of St David's Church Exeter sing: This joyful Eastertide. Thanks to Nigel Walsh

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFPPum6CdNc&list=PLgBLixTy9an6PsLU8VmWzdVSMNzUGSIW&index=14>



It may appear like an ancient icon, but this was painted by Elizabeth Lamour, a French iconographer in 2012.

Reading

Luke 24:13-35

13 Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14 and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, 16 but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. 17 And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad.

18 Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" 19 He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 21 But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. 22 Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 23 and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. 24 Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him."

25 Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! 26 Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" 27 Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

28 As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. 29 But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. 30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

32 They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" 33 That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. 34 They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" 35 Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Comment (from Keith)

Although this Sunday is two weeks after Easter, our reading takes us back to Easter Day, sometime towards the end of the afternoon. Two disciples are walking the seven miles between Jerusalem and the village of Emmaus –possibly where their home is. It was probably an easier journey then than now, as modern Emmaus lies in the West Bank. We only know the name of one of them, Cleopas, but it is not a well-known one, not one of the chosen twelve. The second person could well have been his wife. It would be typical of Luke, to relate his first account of a resurrection appearance of Jesus (and the longest resurrection account of all the gospels) to ordinary people.

The story gives scope for many different approaches.

The journey.

The two disciples (as they discover) are on a journey from the disappointment of a broken dream to a new hope. Roads are important places in the Bible. They link people together, they are dangerous places, you spend time travelling on them, they become symbols of faith on the move.

The unexpected third companion, who involves them in conversation.

But this was not a promising start. It's a bit like asking us today: well, what's going on then? 'Have you been off planet?' comes the exasperated reply. 'Have you not heard of all the measures we have to take because of this epidemic?' Yet interestingly the two are prepared to reveal their faith to a stranger. Perhaps there was more public opinion in favour of Jesus than we realise. 'We had hoped he was the one to redeem Israel.' In this respect they are similar to Thomas in our service last week, who was certain – but incorrect. Our two friends have a different view to Jesus of what the Messiah should do.

Stay with us.

They reach Emmaus, but they are reluctant to say good bye, so they offer hospitality. In Luke's Gospel particularly, meals play an important role in Jesus's ministry. Forget social distancing - Jesus used meals to break down social barriers. Here somehow Jesus takes control from his hosts – to bless the bread and break it in such a way that the penny finally drops. It is an everyday action, not all the explanation and analysis that came earlier, that finally reveals to the two disciples the transformative kingdom of Christ.

You might like to take a few moments to scroll down to look closely at the painting 'The Supper at Emmaus' by Caravaggio and if you still can access last week's service, compare it with his Thomas painting we used then.

Caravaggio Supper at Emmaus (1601, The National Gallery, London)



Caravaggio sets the event not at the disciples' home, but seemingly at an inn. Like the painting of Thomas that we used last week, there are three people as well as Jesus. The third, rather bemused onlooker, is presumably the innkeeper.

With Thomas, the characters were intently staring at the open wound in Christ's side, a long slow examination. Here we have the complete opposite. Caravaggio has captured the very moment of when seeing becomes recognising. The light (of the Spirit?) illuminates the crucial elements, but as with a flashlight it may just be for an instant – but long enough! This transient moment is contrasted with the stillness of food on the table, caught in the same light, and integral to the whole scene.

Look at Jesus. Is this the image you have of him? The clergy of Caravaggio's day didn't like it! Too young, beardless – effeminate almost. Caravaggio is reminding us that the disciples walked the whole journey with Jesus yet failed to recognise him.

Reflective Prayer

Mysterious and Divine Presence,

Too often our hearts burn within us because our bodies know before our minds that you are here working in us and through us in this world. Open our eyes, and help us to recognise you in all places and in all people, for the sake of the one whose presence is never far, Jesus Christ. Amen.

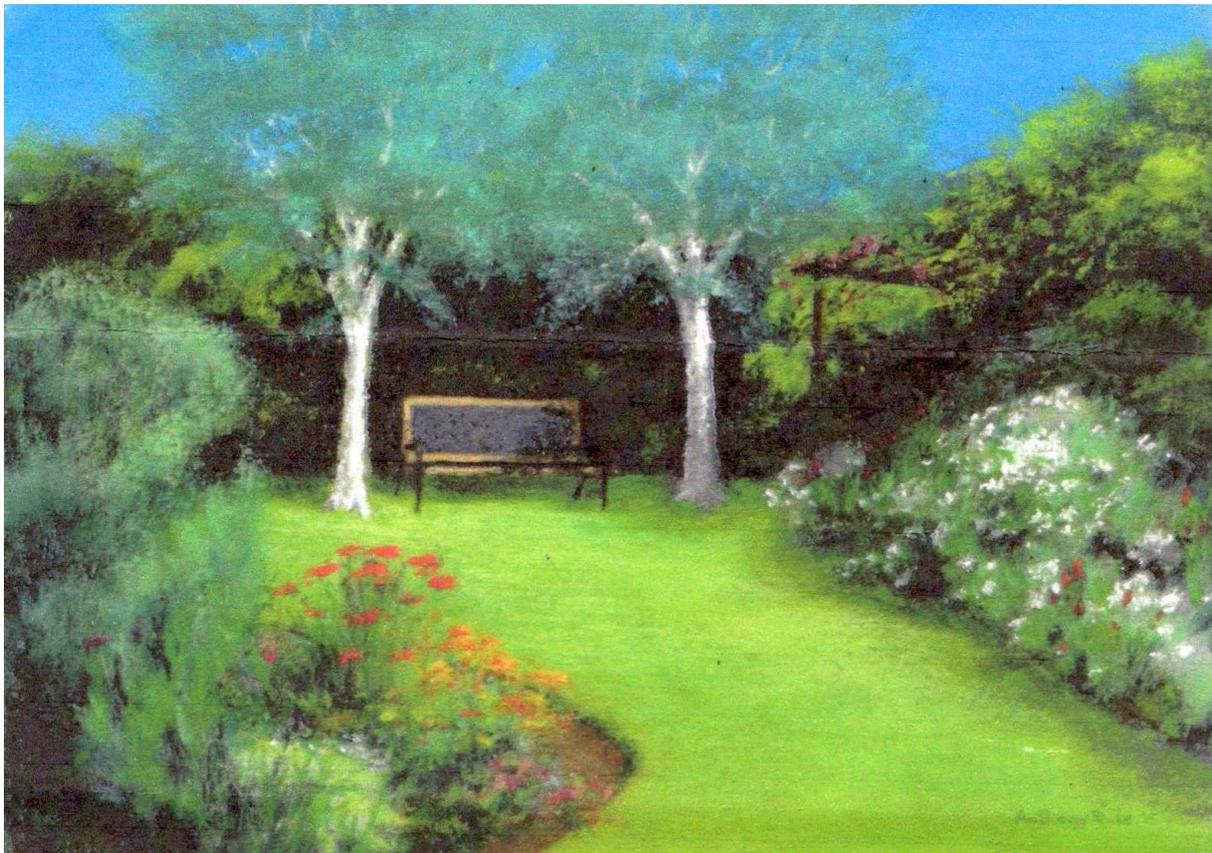
Eric Barreto, Princeton Theological Seminary

Everything has changed – again! We have to take action. The couple rush back as fast as they can to Jerusalem to impart the news.

Inevitably at this time we look at everything in the context of the virus emergency. There are some parallels, and perhaps the best of these for the two disciples and for us is ‘What do we do next?’ We grace this question today with the phrase ‘Exit strategy’, and as the two started their journey, that is probably what they were discussing. Our leader is dead: it seems to be all over. They had heard the report from the two Marys that the tomb was empty and angels had told them Jesus was alive, but this was clearly fake news. Would they go back to where they were before it all started – or would there be some changes to their life that would linger – for a while at least?

Take a few moments to consider this painting by Tony Rule of a Garden Seat at Sandford – picture and following poem courtesy of Charles Edwards.) As you do so you might like to use this link to listen to ‘Hope is a thing with feathers’, Nigel Walsh’s setting of a poem by Emily Dickinson.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IL8NwyP8044&feature=youtu.be>



Then scroll down for this poem.

And the people stayed home, And read books, and listened, and rested, and exercised,
Made art, and played games, and made new ways of being, and were still.
And listened more deeply.
Some meditated, some prayed, some danced.
Some met their shadows.
And the people began to think differently.
And the people healed.
And in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless and heartless ways
The earth began to heal.
And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their
losses,
And made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal
the earth fully, as they had been healed.

The poem starts with lockdown, as indeed it did for the twelve, meeting inside behind closed doors. Our lockdown has lasted over three weeks now and will continue a while longer. Time for people to start doing things differently. This was not the case for the Jesus's followers. They found themselves in the 'when the danger had passed' phase far quicker than anyone expected. But it was more than danger passing, fading away, a solution found. The resurrection had changed everything and there is no compatible Covid 19 analogy. But it was a time to 'make new choices, dream new images, and create new ways to live.'

Intercessions

The local community

Lord, we give thanks for those who share their lives with us, our families, our friends and our neighbours. We thank you for all those who help to hold the community together, as we build up our common life. Help us to be part of the solution, rather than part of the problem. We pray that we may be aware of the needy and provide for those who lack food, work or shelter, particularly in these times of difficulty.

Lord, you promised us that heaviness may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning; in your mercy, hear our prayer

Those who suffer

Lord, we pray for any who are finding life difficult or distressing, for those whose relationships are in jeopardy, and for homes where there is sorrow and darkness. We ask you to look mercifully on any who are grieved with guilt because they have wronged those whom they love: restore the broken relationships and heal the wounds of past betrayals. We pray for any who are distressed by regrets and remorse, and for those who have lost confidence in themselves or the world around them. Strengthen us, we pray, to be your presence to the sick, the weak and the dying and to offer them your comfort and your hope.

Lord, you promised us that heaviness may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning; in your mercy, hear our prayer

The communion of saints

Lord, help us to know you as the one who raises us from death, as you raised your Son, our Saviour. We pray for those whom you have enfolded in the love and peace of your kingdom. And we pray that you will keep them in life and joy everlasting. Lord, guide us with your counsel and be the strength of our hearts, that we may not fall but rejoice in the life of your eternal city; through Jesus Christ our Mediator.

Lord, you promised us that heaviness may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning; in your mercy, hear our prayer

A short Spiritual Communion

The Book of Common Prayer reminds us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly 'eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ', even when we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves.

You may wish to say or pray

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

O God,
help me to trust you,
help me to know that you are with me,
help me to believe that nothing can separate me from your love
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

You might like to access the link below to hear 'Bread is Broken', an anthem written by Richard Skinner and set to music by Nigel Walsh – Thanks to Nigel and Richard for this.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-WUE5nrlw4&feature=youtu.be>

Giving thanks for Christ's death and resurrection you may wish to say

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

(after the Prayer of St Richard of Chichester)

Emmaus 2 by Malcolm Guite

We thought that everything was lost and gone,
Disaster on disaster overtook us
The night we left our Jesus all alone
And we were scattered, and our faith forsook us.
But oh that foul Friday proved far worse,
For we had hoped that he had been the one,
Till crucifixion proved he was a curse,
And on the cross our hopes were all undone.

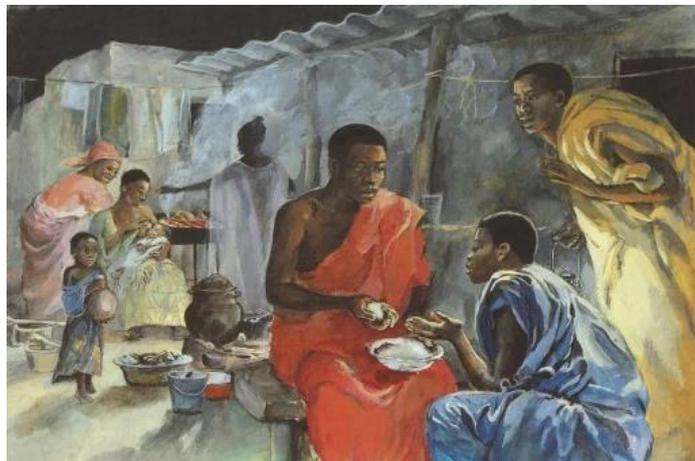
*Oh foolish foolish heart why do you grieve?
Here is good news and comfort to your soul:
Open your mind to scripture and believe
He bore the curse for you to make you whole
The living God was numbered with the dead
That He might bring you Life in broken bread.*

The Conclusion

Renew us in the power of your Spirit
That we may open the doors
And go out into the world
To touch others
And bring words of peace to the people we meet.

The Lord bless us and watch over us;
The Lord make his face to shine upon us and be gracious to us;
The Lord look kindly upon us and give us peace. Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.



At Emmaus – from Cameroon

Please scroll down to next page for evening prayer

This Sunday Evening

Churches Together in Devon in common with Churches Together throughout England are asking that at p.m. each Sunday evening, you light a candle in the windows of your home as a visible symbol of the light of life, Jesus Christ, our source and hope in prayer.

Night Prayer



If you are able to do so, you might wish to light a candle near a window.

Opening prayer:

Spirit of the Risen Christ,
As the lamps light up the evening,
Shine in our hearts and kindle in us the fire of your love.

A reading from 1 Corinthians 15: 1-11

The Resurrection of Christ

15 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance^[a]: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas,^[b] and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. ¹¹ Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

For some time now despite all the problems of lockdown we have had some beautiful spring weather.

Prayer

Glad Bringer of brightness,
Spring's blessing, rainbows embrace:
Teach our hearts to open as the spring flowers
And welcome in your grace.
Teach us to dance with the playful clouds
And laugh with the sun's smile on our face.



Psalm 147 vv 7-11

Sing to the Lord with grateful praise;
make music to our God on the harp.
⁸ He covers the sky with clouds;
he supplies the earth with rain
and makes grass grow on the hills.
⁹ He provides food for the cattle
and for the young ravens when they call.
¹⁰ His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse,
nor his delight in the legs of the warrior;
¹¹ the Lord delights in those who fear him,
who put their hope in his unfailing love.

Prayers for the nation, for those in need, and for those close to you.

Let us pray to the Lord, who is our refuge and stronghold.
For the health and well-being of our nation, that all who are fearful and anxious may be at peace and free from worry:
Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.

For the isolated and housebound, that we may be alert to their needs, and care for them in their vulnerability:
Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.

For our homes and families, our schools and young people, and all in any kind of need or distress:
Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.

For a blessing on our local community, that our neighbourhoods may be places of trust and friendship, where all are known and cared for:
Lord, hear us, Lord, graciously hear us.

We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray, to the mercy and protection of God.
Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

You may like to access this link to St David's church choir singing 'God's power to guide me', a Celtic prayer set to music by an Australian composer, Colin Brumby. Thanks to Nigel Walsh for this.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_j-385THVg&feature=youtu.be

Closing

Today we have walked and talked along the Emmaus road. May we like the disciples then, meet the extraordinary in the ordinary.

Risen Christ, watch over us this night
And keep us in the light of your presence. Amen