



Leeds South & West Methodist Circuit Personal Service for
Sunday 24th April 2022.

Welcome to the Second Sunday in Easter.

To see Jesus in resurrection power no longer needs the sight of human eyes,
it is the inner sight of faith and love that sees him and adores.

Come, it is time to meet the risen Lord in worship.

Hymn StF 348. H&P 256. He is Lord, he is Lord.

Prayer of Praise.

Dead, Lord, they said, dead and buried;
and the new truth of your presence leapt into their lives.
Gone, they said, gone never to be seen again;
and you were there present in heart and community.
Finished, they said, finished and forgotten;
and your friends found you, in a garden, in a room, on a road.
Lost, they said, lost and gone forever;
and your church today proclaims your eternal presence and abiding love.

Alive, we say, alive and thriving. Here, we say, here and everywhere.
Fulfilled, we say, fulfilled and completed. The heartbeat of the world throbs again:
Christ reborn from the grave and his friends with him.

Prayer of Confession.

We confess that we find it hard to live up to the standard of your cross.
In the busyness of our daily lives, we can forget those who don't know love,
warmth, or kindness, those who hunger and thirst and those who are not treated
with equality or are persecuted.
Forgive us Lord, disturb our complacency, and renew us to serve in your name.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer.

Readings for today: - Psalm 118: 14-29. Acts 5:27-32. Rev 1:4-8.

Hymn StF 347. H&P 255. Crown him with many crowns.

Collect for Second Sunday of Easter.

Faithful God,
the strength of all who believe and the hope of those who doubt;
may we, who have not seen, have faith and receive the fullness of Christ's
blessing; who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Message for today. The Gospel of John 20: 19-31.

The Gospel tells us of the second resurrection story and what we should note is the timing, it is at the evening of the day of resurrection. The doors are shut, implying that the disciples have not believed Mary's report and have not gone looking for Jesus, but are still in hiding. No wonder really, they have seen their leader brutally crucified, so what may happen to his followers. The doors are shut because of fear. How very human. The fear and the locked doors are however no barrier to the resurrected Christ. Jesus appears in the room with them and his first words are "Peace be with you." He repeats this assurance, knowing that his disciples are in particular need of peace. They live in a violent society and have barricaded themselves in for fear of being persecuted as followers of Jesus.

Here comes Jesus into the midst of this fear and hiding, proclaiming "Peace be with you." Interwoven with this proclamation is the affirmation of his identity. The marks on Jesus' body show that he is the very same beloved leader who was nailed to the cross and suffered and died. The theme of Jesus' humanity and death, joined with his divinity and resurrection is central for John's community.

Jesus doesn't ask the disciples to conquer their fear on their own. He breathes on them the Holy Spirit, drawing parallels with the creative action of God, breathing life into the first human being. Jesus does what God the Father does: he sends out the disciples and breathes the life-giving Spirit into them. This gift fulfills the promise Jesus made to his friends, regarding the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, sent by the Father, in Christ's name, to teach the disciples everything and remind them of all that Jesus said to them including "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your heart be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." The gift of the Holy Spirit, who is the presence of Christ after Christ departs, is both the guide to truth and the guarantor of peace. Both the guidance and the peace will be essential for the disciples as they go out into a hostile world.

The disciple Thomas was not with the other disciples in that locked room when Jesus appears. We are not told why he misses the first resurrection appearance. But the term 'doubting Thomas' is said to originate from his being told by the other disciples that they had seen the Lord. He responds with "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." Thomas will have been consumed by grief and loss and not be persuaded by the testimony of the other disciples.

Like Mary Magdalene at the tomb, consumed with grief and despair, that she did not recognize her Lord, until he calls her name. Thomas needs more than the testimony of others, until he can see and touch the wounds of Jesus, he doubts. Both Mary and Thomas have a need, which is a potential barrier to faith, but in each case the risen Lord gives them the attention to heal their faithlessness.

For Thomas, Jesus again arrives in a locked room among his disciples and announces, "Peace be with you." But then Jesus immediately singles out Thomas

and gives him exactly what he had demanded – the chance to put his fingers into the nail wounds in his hands and his hand into the wound in his side. This action by the Lord addresses Thomas' root cause of doubt and he tells him "Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him "My Lord and my God." Jesus then told him "Because you have seen me, you have believed: blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." The experience of Thomas, the other disciples, and Mary, in seeing the risen Lord, have become the witness for all readers of the Gospels down the years.

Reading the account of Thomas' experience after the resurrection and his need for seeing proof of the risen Lord, makes me wonder how we can share that proof of the living Lord in today's world.

How can we see Jesus at all, given our distance in time and space from his bodily presence on earth?

How do we relate today, to what happened that first Easter time?

It is clear in the Gospel of John, that characters are led to faith through differing experiences and evidence. We have the witness of the text of the Gospels, that tell the story by the disciples of their living experience and witness to the Lord. The Gospels are the power that can nurture a Christian community, they should be shared and lived out, to enable 'those who have not seen' to become and remain believers.

To do that we must not remain behind the locked doors of our churches. We should be amongst the people of our communities, both Christian and those who have yet to see and believe, wishing the peace with them. We should not let doubts be a barrier to Jesus for those outside our church communities. Belief is not a physical sight or presence; it is a gift of God in the Holy Spirit. Those who have not seen Jesus in the flesh instead know the grace of belief and trust that comes from God.

Verse 31 of John's gospel states 'But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.' May God inspire and strengthen our trust in the mighty and life-giving name of Jesus, Son of God, incarnate, crucified, resurrected life-giver. **Amen.**

Hymn StF 338. There is a redeemer.

Prayers of Intercession.

Lord, we pray for the world in need of your resurrection power;
for a world where there is so much suffering and pain,
where many people have nowhere to live or feel safe and secure.
for the world where hundreds of thousands are being driven from their homes by
war and for those whose lives will never be the same again
because of the horrors they have witnessed.
May the risen Christ bring hope and peace.

Lord in your mercy..... **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for people in need of your resurrection power:
for those whose attitudes of hate, resentment and bitterness and a desire to dominate cause hurt and deep wounds in the lives of others;
for those whose hearts are filled with sadness and sorrow
because of the loss of those they love.
May the risen Christ fill them with new hope.

Lord in your mercy..... **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who work for peace;
for those who take enormous risks to help those who are victims of war;
for those who sacrifice their own comfort and security
for the sake of those who have no one to care for them;
for those whose words and deeds bring hope
to those crushed by their experiences of life;
for those who give little thought for their own needs
because they see only the hurt of others.
May the risen Christ fill them with his grace.

Lord in your mercy..... **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for the governments and leaders around the world;
those who have the power to help those who are victims of war;
for those who have the power to offer safe shelter, food and clothing;
May the risen Christ fill them with compassion.

Lord in your mercy..... **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for any we know in our communities to be in particular need:
those who are ill, anxious, depressed or afraid,
those who are seeking guidance and the presence of God;
We pray for ourselves and all that is concerning us now
and for all we must face tomorrow.
May the risen Christ be with us.

Lord in your mercy..... **Hear our prayer.**

We ask all our prayers in the name of the risen Christ. Amen.

Hymn. StF 313. H&P 212. Thine be the Glory.

Blessing.

Lord, we believe, help us where faith falls short.
We reach out for that which we cannot yet hold,
raise our sights towards that which we cannot yet see,
hold to a faith we find it difficult to express.
It is enough to know that you are the path we tread and remain our goal.