

Prayers and Reflection for the Third Sunday of Easter

Sunday 26th April 2020

Gathering Ourselves in Prayer

You may like to be still, light a candle, or listen to a calming piece of music as we gather in worship.

Affirming our Easter Faith

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Gracious god,

Even when we cannot gather physically together, we come to walk a journey together with our companion Christians across the world to meet and to know Jesus.

Help us to marvel at all that Jesus has done for us.

And be with us now we pray. Amen.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! (1 Peter 1.3)

Hymn: Easter Jubilation Fills the Streets and Towns (StF 299)

(Click below to sing along with a primary school on YouTube)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJyDf6bEVrI>

Easter jubilation fills the streets and towns,
Celebrations have begun.

Hear the music and the dancing now,

Join the laughter and the fun!

Oh, raise a joyful shout!

Clap your hands and dance,

Let your feelings out.

Oh, hear what it's all about:

Christ, the Lord, has come

To set us free.

There's a promise of a better day,
Join the laughter and the fun!

Oh, raise a joyful shout!....

La, la, la, la, la, la,.....

Oh, raise a joyful shout!....

Easter jubilation fills the streets and
towns.....

Oh, raise a joyful shout!....

Hoy!

Mark & Helen Johnson

Put aside your sorrows, wipe your tears
away,

For a better time will come.

Prayers

God our Creator, we're blown away by the story of Jesus, going all the way back to the beginning of time, leading all the way to the cross and carrying on until today.

Thank you for caring enough about us to make us part of this story!

Father, we thank you that you come out and meet us where we are.

We worship and adore you.

We thank you that you walk the road with us, that you treat us as an equal even when we fail to recognise you.

We worship and adore you.

You always love us, always care for us, always want to eat and drink with us – such is your love.

We worship and adore you.

Thank you, Lord, that you are not a stranger, but our friend.

We worship and adore you.

Risen Lord, we are sorry that we fail to recognise you in our midst, that we are too preoccupied with ourselves. We are sorry that we let you down, through our thoughts, our words and our actions.

Holy Spirit, our guide, we're sorry when we misunderstand because we haven't listened properly; we're sorry for being impatient when you haven't finished speaking.

Show us the way to hear and to wait.

Lord Jesus, as you walked on the road to Emmaus, walk with us on the roads we travel.
Help us to know your presence with us, and to be your presence to others. And, at the end of the day, may we welcome you into our homes, our hearts and our lives.
In the name of our risen Lord Jesus we pray. Amen.

Bible Readings:

1 Peter 1.17-23

Luke 24.13-35

Hymn: Jesus Lives! Thy Terrors Now (Tune H&P 198, altered lyrics)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bN9XS_9hdRQ

Jesus lives! Thy terrors now
Can, O death, no more appal us;
Jesus lives! By this we know
Thou, O grave, canst not enthrall us:
Alleluia!

Jesus lives! Henceforth is death
But the gate of life immortal;
This shall calm our trembling breath
When we pass its gloomy portal:
Alleluia!

Jesus lives! For us he died:
Then, alone to Jesus living,
Pure in heart may we abide,
Glory to our Saviour giving:
Alleluia!

Jesus lives! Our hearts know well
Nought from us his love shall sever;
Life, nor death, nor powers of hell,
Tear us from his keeping ever:
Alleluia!

Jesus lives! To him the throne
Over all the world is given;
May we go where he is gone,
Rest and reign with him in heaven.
Alleluia!

C. F. Gellert

"This is not how we planned it!"

A Reflection by the Revd. Dr. David Hinchliffe, Chair of District

This is not how we planned it! We knew that if I was appointed Chair of the South East District of the Methodist Church, it would be inconvenient. For a year I would have to split my time between England and Guernsey; my family staying in Guernsey. So I planned to be in Guernsey at least every three weeks. It was working. Then coronavirus and lockdown. I found myself stuck in England and my family in Guernsey. We don't know when we will see each other again. This is not how we planned it!

Luke's gospel describes two friends walking to Emmaus discussing the news: Jesus had been hailed a king (Palm Sunday), then condemned to death and executed (Good Friday). They explained to a fellow traveller, "We had hoped he was the one to redeem Israel." Their hopes were dashed. This was not how they planned it. They never expected to see Jesus again. They were trying to come to terms with his death. Now they had to come to terms with a new normal: Jesus was alive!

I was struck some time ago by a comment the then President of the Methodist Conference made in a visit to the Channel Islands. He commented that most Methodists were "functional atheists." Quite a shocking claim. This didn't mean that Methodists were bad people, or that they didn't serve faithfully, but that somehow, in some way their life and their faith didn't fully connect. What they believed didn't change how they lived. Is that Cleopas and his friend? They read the scriptures; they clearly adored Jesus. But when their unnamed companion along the way discussed what had happened it was clear that their understanding of the Scriptures did not connect with what Jesus had said and done. They believed, but they were functional atheists. They never expected to see Jesus again – alive. They were focused on coming to terms with his death. Now they had to come to terms with a new normal. Jesus was alive. This was not what they planned – or expected. And what about you?

How does your reading of the Bible and what you know of Jesus connect with your life?

In the evening they drew near to Emmaus. The two friends offered hospitality to their companion. As they sat around the meal table, the friend took bread, thanked God for it, broke it and shared it.

Instantly they recognised Jesus. This was not how they planned it! They never expected to see Jesus again – alive. They were focused on coming to terms with his death. Now they could see him face to face – in the flesh! In that moment of recognition and joy Jesus vanished from their sight.

This week someone posted on Facebook a stunning painting: Jesus washing the feet of an utterly exhausted doctor/nurse/care worker, fully gowned in their personal protective equipment. It was a deeply moving image which helped me to see Jesus differently. Where do we see Jesus? The two friends never realised he was there with them along the way. Where do we see Jesus right now? The phone call, the neighbour doing the shopping, the gift or message left on the doorstep? The Doctor, nurse, care worker, shop assistant, train driver, key worker? And how do people see Jesus in you and in me? Can they? Or are we functional atheists – “having the form of religion but without the power” as John Wesley once famously put it?

Of course when the two friends recognised Jesus in their midst not only did their hearts burn within them, they immediately hurried back to Jerusalem to share their joy. The moment of revelation filled them with joy – and they wanted to share it! The world had shifted on its axis permanently. His friends never planned for the possibility that what Jesus said was true! Now they had to live completely differently. Because Jesus was alive for them, and in them.

It's hard to live differently. I'm bursting to see my wife and children again. The two friends discovered that a new normal was different to the old normal. Nothing they saw or did would be the same again. Jesus was raised from the dead. Alive.

We didn't plan for Covid-19. When the new normal comes, may we appreciate our islands, our world, each other, being together, life itself in a new way. Until that liberation comes for us may we know the risen Jesus walks with us and see him in new ways. And may he live in us. After all, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. By his mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!”

Prayers

Loving God, you are with us, travelling beside us:

Lord, open our eyes to see you.

Loving God, as we live through these difficult and bewildering times, times we did not plan for and scarcely understand, much less see our way through; help us to know deep within our hearts that, Loving God, you are with us, travelling beside us:

Lord, open our eyes to see you.

Gracious God, as you walked with the companions to Emmaus, help us to ask the questions in our hearts; open our hearts and minds to understand the Scriptures; help us to see you in them, and in their light, help us to become more like you. Loving God, you are with us, travelling beside us:

Lord, open our eyes to see you.

Mysterious God, the friends were talking about you, yet couldn't see you beside them. Open our eyes to see you with us. Open our eyes to recognise you in the loving service of others. Opening our eyes to see you:

- in the leaders of the nations as they struggle to contain the coronavirus
- in the sacrificial service of the staff of our health services
- in workers whom we so often are blind to; those who grow our food, prepare it, stack it on shelves, sell and deliver it
- in the key workers who hold our communities together
- in the scientists working hard to test for the virus, and to find ways to counter its effects
- in ways we just never expected to see you, but find you there!

Loving God, you are with us, travelling beside us:

Lord, open our eyes to see you.

Healing God, the friends were so overwhelmed by grief, they could not make sense of anything. Be with those who are grieving today. Be especially with those who must grieve from afar. Be with those who are sick, and those who are dying, whose comfort can only be the presence of medical and care staff, but not their families and friends. Be with us in our fear and isolation. Help us by the miracle of your love to discover this wonder of wonders; Loving God, you are with us, travelling beside us:

Lord, open our eyes to see you.

For this we believe deep in our hearts:

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father....

Hymn: The Strife is O'er, the Battle Done (Tune H&P 214, altered words)

The YouTube video below was recorded "virtually" for this Easter Day, combining nearly 800 submissions from individuals 'isolated' all around the world.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JAyi64eagTI>

1. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
The strife is o'er, the battle done;
The victory of life is won;
The song of Triumph has begun:
Alleluia!

2. The powers of death have done their
worst;
But Christ their legions has dispersed;
Let shouts of holy joy outburst:
Alleluia!

3. The three sad days have quickly sped,
He rises glorious from the dead;
All glory to our risen Head:
Alleluia!

4. He closed the yawning gates of hell;
The bars from heaven's high portals fell;
Let hymns of praise his triumph tell:
Alleluia!

5. Lord, by the stripes which wounded
thee,
From death's dread sting thy servants free,
That we may live, and sing to Thee:
Alleluia!

17th Century, tr. Francis Pott

Closing Prayer

Abide with us, Lord, throughout this day.

Abide with us in our journeying with you.

Abide with us in our homes.

Abide with us in our seeking and in our longings.

Abide with us in a restful night.

Abide with us now and to eternity,

Jesus, risen Lord, who loves and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit

In glory for ever. **Amen.**

The Blessing

God the Father

By whose glory Christ was raised from the dead,

Strengthen us to walk with Him in his risen life;

And may Almighty God bless us:

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Jesus said,

'Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you.

Receive the Holy Spirit.'

Alleluia! Alleluia!