



Sunday, 26 April, 2020
Third Sunday of Easter

Collect and Readings for
The Third Sunday of Easter

Almighty Father,
Who in your great mercy gladdened the disciples
with the sight of the risen Lord;
give us such knowledge of this presence with us,
that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life
and serve you continually in righteousness and truth;
through Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you;
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Old Testament Reading (Zephaniah 3: 14 – end)

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult
with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away the
judgments against you,
he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the
LORD, is in your midst;
you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said
to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow

weak. The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you^[d] in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival I will remove disaster from you so that you will not bear reproach for it. I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the LORD.

New Testament Reading (Acts 2: 14a & 36 - 41)

Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ...

Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah,^[h] this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” And he testified with

many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Gospel Reading (Luke 24: 13 -35)

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. 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?" 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, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 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. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 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. 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.” Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah^[1] should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. 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. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. 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?” That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Reflection for The Third Sunday of Easter

Sarah Cottrill

Part of my “Lent discipline” this year was to read John Crossan’s book *The greatest Prayer* in which he studies, line by line, the Lord’s Prayer. The book contains some thought-provoking ideas but for me the author overplayed the metaphor card! It seems everything is a metaphor for something else. So when my Bible

Commentary suggested that the account of the episode on the road to Emmaus might be a metaphor for Christian discipleship, I was greatly tempted to throw the book away in disgust!

Fortunately I didn't, as this author, Michael Wilcock, makes some very valid and useful points. So let's take a look at just what happened on that journey and how it reflects the nature of Christian discipleship.

The two disciples, unaware of the dramatic events unfolding around Jerusalem, are walking to Emmaus. They are sad, bewildered and frightened. Jesus, though unrecognised, meets them, walks alongside them, asks why they are sad and explains Scripture to them. He understands, and meets, their deepest underlying need. And what can we learn from this? In what way is this a metaphor for Christian discipleship?

Firstly, we learn that an academic knowledge of the scriptures is not enough. We have no reason to suppose that Cleopas and his companion weren't well versed in their Scriptures. On the contrary, they almost certainly were. Yet this knowledge was insufficient to sustain them through the desperate times they were facing. For this they had to encounter the risen Christ. For us, whilst reading and knowing the Bible is important, it is not, of itself, enough. The words we read need to *live* in our hearts and this will only happen when we encounter Christ for ourselves.

Jesus met with the two disciples and walked with them on their sad journey but they didn't recognise him. This is the second point for us to learn. When we are in the depths of despair, it is easy to think that God is absent, to not recognise him when he walks alongside

in the guise of friend or stranger. God has promised he will never leave us and, difficult though it sometimes is, we need to remember and trust this promise, even – and especially – when we are going through traumatic experiences. God may not appear to us in heavenly visions or dramatic ways but that friend who unexpectedly phones us, or the unknown person who speaks or does some small act of kindness for us, may be the tool God's using to reach us at that particular moment. (Remember the words of Teresa of Avila: *Christ has no body now on earth but yours*. We are called to be his body to others; they are called to be his body to us!) Perhaps we need to be more open to seeing God in those we meet and be prepared to learn from them. Because this is the third thing that happened to those two travellers; the unknown fellow-traveller explained the well-known but hither-to misunderstood Scriptures to them. We can all learn from one another. Nobody, however learned, knows all the answers and nobody can say, with integrity, that their interpretation is correct or more accurate than anybody else's. With humility and openness of mind, we can all learn from each other and this is the great benefit of home Bible Study groups.

Having met and walked with them, and explained the Scriptures to them, Christ then made himself known to the two disciples and they rushed back to share the good news with the other disciples. Our joy should be no less and neither should our eagerness to share that joy with others.

As I write this, we are being warned that lockdown will last "at least another three weeks." Coronavirus and the despondency it creates

dominates our media and our lives but it must not be allowed to diminish our faith or our Easter joy. Lockdown applies to our front doors shutting us in. It does not mean we lockdown our hearts, shutting Jesus out. Rather, they must be open to receive him and to allow us to meet him on the road we are all walking together, though apart.

Prayer

This week sees the feast days of Catherine of Siena (April 29th) and Philip and James (May 1st). Here is some brief information about them and their collects which you might like to use.

Catherine of Siena was born in 1347 and from an early age was known for her piety. She followed a life of contemplative prayer and mystical experience, devoting herself to the care of the poor and sick. She became increasingly sought as an advisor on both religious and political matters. Her writings stressed her devotion to the Precious Blood of Jesus. Catherine died on this day, 1380 after suffering a stroke.

Collect

God of compassion,
Who gave your servant Catherine of Siena
A wondrous love of the passion of Christ;
Grant that your people may be united to him in his majesty
And rejoice for ever in the revelation of his glory;
Who is alive and reigns with you;
In the unity of the Holy Spirit,
One God, now and for ever. Amen.

Philip and James appear in the list of the twelve apostles given in the first three gospels. Philip was the third to be called by Jesus and then brought Nathanael to the Lord.

James, said to be the son of Alphaeus, is also known as “James the Less.”

According to legend, James was clubbed and stoned to death at the instigation of the High Priest Ananias, whilst Philip was martyred in Phrygia at the age of 87.

Philip and James are celebrated on the same day because the church in Rome, where their relics were laid to rest, was dedicated on this day in 560.

Collect

Almighty Father,
Whom truly to know is eternal life;
Teach us to know your Son Jesus Christ
As the way, the truth and the life;
That we may follow the steps
Of your holy apostles Philip and James;
And walk steadfastly in the way that leads to your glory;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For those with internet access, there are many prayer resources on the Church of England website. The clergy and ALMs would also be very pleased to pray with people by phone or online means such as SKYPE; please refer to the contact details on the back page.

You might also like to go to

<https://www.facebook.com/stjohninbedwardine>

where Colin Nash is posting prayers, helpful information and a Church of the day Quiz – identify the religious building featuring in the photograph.

Weddings and Funerals

Weddings are not currently able to take place. Please remember in your prayers couples whose weddings have had to be postponed – especially Andrew and Laura who would have married in St John's Church last week and Benjamin and Katie, due to have married at the beginning of May.

Advice for funerals is that only immediate family (maximum of five), should attend and that anyone in a vulnerable group should not be present. We recognise that this is very difficult and as funerals have to have such small numbers, memorial services can be arranged for after the lifting of the restrictions which would allow everyone to honour the person's life.

Coronavirus (Covid-19)

Remember to keep up to date with latest government advice, especially on self-isolating and social distancing. The advice is given for a reason. It is not only for your own protection, but for the protection of the most vulnerable groups in society, so please do not interact with other people if you have symptoms or believe you have been exposed to the virus. If this causes problems, such as with obtaining food, we are available to help; please refer to the contacts list on the back page.

Shopping and Local Food Deliveries

Recent days have been very difficult in the supermarkets. We have a team of volunteers who are willing to help with shopping should that prove necessary, and supermarkets are prioritising home delivery for the most vulnerable groups.

The two butchers in St Johns are also offering help. Dayus (01905 422459) are taking orders by phone and are doing free home delivery. Payment can also be over the phone. Narraway (01905 424488) have also indicated that they will do their best to help people who are in self-isolation or struggling to get to the shops at this time.

Other organisations able to offer help and support include:

Childline: 0800 1111

Samaritans: 116 123

Domestic Violence Hotline: 0808 2000 247

The Survivors Trust: 0808 801 0181

Mind: 0300 123 3393

Age UK: 0800 169 6565