

The Vine at Home

18th April 2021 – Third Sunday of Easter

Call to worship

Easter God, we come again to gather in your presence:
To worship, to give thanks for the miracle of resurrection, happening all around us today
Amen.¹

Hymn: 351 STF – In Christ alone

Opening Prayers

Risen Saviour, Jesus our Lord,
We love you and we are so grateful that you love us so much that you were prepared to give up everything and live on earth, showing us how to live, and then to die, all so that we might know what it means to become children of God.

Pour your Holy Spirit into our lives that we may grow more like you.

For your life which informs our living, for your compassion which changes our hearts, for your clear speaking which contradicts our vague generalities, for your disturbing presence, your innocent suffering, your fearless dying and then rising to life breathing forgiveness, we praise and worship you.

As we worship, help us to know your presence with us, open our minds and hearts we pray.

Generous God, whose love is free to all,
We often struggle to be the people that you want us to be, loving one another as brothers and sisters in your world-wide family.

Shape our lives into an expression of faith.

Protect us from cultural forces which try to conform us to an image other than yours. Show us the harm we do when we water down the good news of your love, when we become a mirror reflecting the world's brokenness and hate, rather than a window through which your wholeness and love can shine.

Lord, we fail you in so many ways, we are so sorry...*[Pause]*.

'I am making all things new', says the Lord. This is Christ's gracious word: 'Your sins are forgiven'. Amen. Thanks be to God²

Let us now say the Lord's Prayer

Readings: Acts 3:1-19 Peter Heals a Crippled Beggar

3 One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon. **2** And a man lame from birth was being carried in. People would lay him daily at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the temple. **3** When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked them for alms. **4** Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, "Look at

¹ Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Diane Robinson

us.” **5** And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. **6** But Peter said, “I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,^[a] stand up and walk.” **7** And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. **8** Jumping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. **9** All the people saw him walking and praising God, **10** and they recognized him as the one who used to sit and ask for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Peter Speaks in Solomon’s Portico

11 While he clung to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the portico called Solomon’s Portico, utterly astonished. **12** When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, “You Israelites,^[b] why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? **13** The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant^[c] Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. **14** But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, **15** and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. **16** And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus^[d] has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.

17 “And now, friends,^[e] I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. **18** In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah^[f] would suffer. **19** Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out.”³

1 John 3:1-7

3 See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears,^[a] we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. ³ All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

⁴ Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. ⁵ But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. ⁶ No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

⁷ Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.⁴

Luke 24:36b – 48 - Jesus Appears to His Disciples

36 While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”^[a] **37** They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. **38** He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? **39** Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” **40** And when he had said

^{3,4} Bible Text is from New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved

this, he showed them his hands and his feet.^[b] **41** While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” **42** They gave him a piece of broiled fish, **43** and he took it and ate in their presence.

44 Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” **45** Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, **46** and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah^[c] is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, **47** and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. **48** You are witnesses^[d] of these things.⁵

Reflections on the readings

For our reflection, Bishop Tom Wright unpacks a little bit more about what these stories of Jesus after the resurrection might mean for us:

The ancient world knew all about ghosts, visions, apparitions, and spooks. Ancient literature has plenty of people being found alive after being supposed dead, plenty of spirits of the dead returning to haunt, spy on, or chat with the living. Jesus’ disciples could easily have used such categories to explain their extraordinary experiences of the presence of the risen Jesus.

That they did not is powerful testimony to what actually happened. The real explanation is stranger, and is backed up by evidence of various kinds. The disciples were confronted with a new form of reality, for which they were unprepared, but for which the language of resurrection (not of ghosts, or of mere resuscitations) was available. Jesus, they believed, had gone through death and out the other side into a new mode of life. This was, naturally enough, difficult to describe, but it seems to have involved his physical body being transformed so that it was now inhabiting both our space and God’s space.

And this is what life might be like for us, too. There aren’t words to describe what we shall be, says John, but when Jesus is revealed we shall be like him. We shall see him as he is; and we shall be changed into his likeness, into the Easter mode of being. That’s mind-boggling, of course, but that’s the point. Good theology requires good imagination!

Easter humanity, in fact, is genuine humanity, as opposed to humanity distorted and defaced by sin, decay and death. Resurrection power comes to us, as it were, from our future, so that we can anticipate the truly human life in the here and now.

The power that healed the physical cripple, glorifying the God of Israel in the process, is available to heal moral cripples (like you and I) as well.⁶

[Pause].

What about you? Do you need to be healed of something?

Do you need to let go of something to which you hold on too tightly?

Do you need to be transformed by that ‘resurrection power’ that comes to us from these Jesus stories?

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⁶ Taken from Twelve Months of Sundays Year B by NT Wright

[Pause to reflect].

As you are loved by an amazing, life-giving God who accepts each one of us just as we are, so too, may you find ways to demonstrate that love to others.
'Love one another, even as I have loved you.'

Amen.

What are you being called to?

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28: 19-20

[Pause]

What does it mean for you "to go and make disciples?"

What sort of leaders do you think the church needs?

Do you have these gifts?

Let us pray.

Jesus, when you command us to 'go' and share your Good News with the world, we have a range of thoughts and feelings; sometimes we are afraid, sometimes we think you don't mean for us to do anything, sometimes we are excited. Jesus, help us to pay attention to the thoughts and feelings that hold us back so that we can bring those to you in prayer.

Amen.

Prayers of intercession

As we pray for the world, our nation and our local community we remember the words found in today's Psalm: "Give me relief from my distress".

Living God, as we pray for the world that you created, we remember those effected by war.

We pray, grant them relief from their distress.

For those who are living with the effects of climate change. Whether the effects are reduced crops, increased risk of flooding or simply an adverse effect on their living.

We pray, grant them relief from their distress.

For the Christians who profess their faith in Christ but have to remain silent due to their geographical location. We pray that you might embolden them and encourage them.

We pray, grant them relief from their distress.

We pray for those who have been impacted in an adverse way due to Brexit. For small and large business, for the livelihoods impacted.

We pray, grant them relief from their distress.

As we journey as a resurrection community, we lift our nation in prayer. We particularly pray for our health care system and all who serve within it. May they receive comfort and support from near and a far.

We pray, grant them relief from their distress.

We remember those who are left without a home and face an uncertain tomorrow.

We pray, grant them relief from their distress.

For those today who face their own mental health struggles. We ask that support might be readily available and they know of your loving presence.

We pray, grant them relief from their distress.

We lift all those in our nation and around the world who are victims of racism. We pray for a levelling of systems and a breakdown of racial discrimination. We ask that Lord you might be with all those affected and grant them relief from their distress.

In our local community, we remember the work of the church. We remember the lives it impacts and all those associated with it. We pray that you will grant them relief from their distress.

In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen.⁷

Hymn: 239 STF – Sent by the Lord am I

Blessing

As we rise from this place, we rise as witnesses to your love, O God.

As we go from this moment of worship, we go as vessels for your Spirit.

May your love flow through us, and out into the world.

Go in peace, and love one another.

Amen.⁸

⁷ Prayers of intercession written by Matthew Forsyth

⁸ Additional prayers by Tim Baker