



St Peter's Wolvercote & All Saints Wytham Third Sunday of Easter 26 April 2020

Alleluia. Christ is risen!

Dear Friends

This Sunday is the third Sunday of Easter - still very much in the Easter season! - and we hear the beautiful story of the Road to Emmaus. Two disciples, in perplexing and bewildering times, make a journey from lockdown in Jerusalem to isolation in Emmaus. On the way, an unexpected stranger joins them on the road. As we hear this beautiful story of how the risen Jesus meets with us where we are, may we, on our strange journey, be aware that the risen Jesus is walking with us too.

With love and prayer.

Charles

Hymn: Now the green blade riseth

Hymn: [Now the green blade rises](#) (Ely Cathedral Choir)

1 Now the green blade riseth, from the buried grain,
Wheat that in dark earth many days has lain;
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

2 In the grave they laid Him, Love who had been slain,
Thinking that He never would awake again,
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

3 Forth He came at Easter, like the risen grain,
Jesus who for three days in the grave had lain;
Quick from the dead the risen One is seen:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

4 When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,
Jesus' touch can call us back to life again,
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:
Love is come again like wheat that springeth green.

Holy Communion in the Easter Season

The Lord be with you

All and also with you

Alleluia. Christ is risen!

All He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord,
we come to you in sorrow for our sins,
and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength,
and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us.

All Lord, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes,
as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us.

All Lord, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone,
and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us.

All Lord, hear us and help us.

May the God of love and power
forgive *you* and free *you* from *your* sins,
heal and strengthen *you* by his Spirit,
and raise *you* to new life in Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Collect

Let us pray

Almighty Father, who in your great mercy gladdened the disciples with the sight of the risen Lord: give us such knowledge of his 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.

Readings

Acts 2.14a,36-41

On the day of Pentecost, ¹⁴Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd, ³⁶'Let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.' ³⁷Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, 'Brothers, what should we do?' ³⁸Peter 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. ³⁹For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.' ⁴⁰And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.' ⁴¹So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added to their number.

For the gift of the Word, **Thanks be to God.**

1 Peter 1.17-23

¹⁷If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. ¹⁸You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. ²⁰He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. ²¹Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God. ²²Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. ²³You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.

For the gift of the Word

Thanks be to God.

The Gospel Reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to
Luke (24.13-35)

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹³On that same day, two of the disciples were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then 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?' ¹⁹Jesus 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, ²⁰and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹But 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. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and 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. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see Jesus.' ²⁵Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹But 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. ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized Jesus; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They 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?' ³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Alleluia, alleluia

I am the first and the last, says the Lord, and the living one;

I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore.

Alleluia.

Talk: The Road to Emmaus

I love the Easter stories – the stories of the risen Jesus meeting with his disciples. I feel that these are the stories in the gospels that we can particularly relate to, because they are closest to our experience. As we read of the disciples encountering the risen Jesus, often in unexpected ways and in unexpected places, we can think of how the risen Jesus meets with us too, in our lives today.

Who were these two people on the journey to Emmaus? Clearly, they are not any of the twelve apostles. Luke identifies one of them as Cleopas. As John's gospel mentions "Mary the wife of Clopas" as one of the women who stood near the cross as Jesus died, it seems likely that this is the same Clopas, and perhaps his companion was in fact his wife Mary. Perhaps that is the point – this is just an ordinary couple, followers of Jesus but not part of the twelve apostles.

Like us at present, they are on a journey in troubling and perplexing times. John's gospel tells us that the disciples in Jerusalem are in lockdown, afraid that after crucifying their leader, the Jewish authorities will go after them next. Perhaps for these two, it seemed a good idea to get out of Jerusalem all together – maybe Emmaus felt a safer place.

We too are on a journey through this present crisis. I wonder if like us in our family you are glued to the news every day, while at the same time almost wishing you could walk away. But it feels important to walk on this journey with the rest of our country, praying for those caught up in the thick of it, and playing our part in whatever way we can.

And we can identify with the bewilderment and perplexity felt by these two on their journey to Emmaus. Like them, we wonder where all this is going – how long will it be before the danger is past, and where on earth will we be at the end of it.

It seems strange at first that they don't recognise the stranger who joins them on the road. But it is not so surprising. At first, he was probably an unwelcome stranger. Just as we at present keep our "social distance" when we meet others outside our homes, so they are probably trying to keep a distance. They don't know who he is – he could be a threat. Probably they don't recognize him because they don't dare to look at him too closely, in case he might recognize them. And it may have been dark – and his head may have been covered. In any case the last person on earth they would expect to see is Jesus.

But I think something more important is going on here. Jesus doesn't want them to recognize him yet. He wants them

to listen to what he has to say. Once they have recognized him, their shock will be so great that they won't hear anything else!

And there is another theme here. I think in this story we see God's reluctance to impose himself on us. Throughout the New Testament, the evidence for Jesus, for his resurrection, and for his identity as the incarnation of God is always very strong, but never quite a cast iron open and shut case. There is always room for doubt. When I look at the evidence for Christian faith, it seems to me far more reasonable to believe than not to believe. And yet at the end of the day, we must choose. We have to want this. It feels deliberate that God wants us to choose – he does not want to impose himself on us.

Perhaps that is the meaning of the statement "their eyes were kept from recognizing him". And it seems even clearer later on:

"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."

I think this is especially important. Jesus walked ahead. If they had let him go, all they would have had was an insightful conversation. They would never have fully encountered the risen Jesus. It is only because they invited him – urged him in fact – to come into their home with them, that that they fully encountered him as the risen Jesus. And I think for us too, we have to invite him in first, and only then do we begin to encounter him and discover him in our lives.

The end of the story is of course the bit we are missing at present – when Jesus breaks bread with them. It feels like we are still on that journey, walking along that road to Emmaus, looking forward to the time we can meet and break bread together again. But I believe the risen Jesus is with us, walking beside us along this road.

One of the things I love about this story is the way that Jesus begins the conversation as they walk along together: 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?'

Jesus starts where they are. He listens first to what they have to say. And then he responds. And that says something very special about how the risen Jesus meets with us in our lives. He meets us where we are. He asks us to tell him where we are, what is troubling us, what is on our minds. And he listens.

There is a beautiful retelling of the story of the road to Emmaus in one of the less well known of C.S. Lewis's Narnia books, "The horse and his boy". Shasta, the central character in the book, has been brought up in the oppressive southern kingdom of Calormen, and has never met Aslan the Lion, who the Narnians know as their Saviour.

Towards the end of the book, when Shasta is feeling tired, disillusioned, and very sorry for himself, as he walks alone on a foggy morning, he becomes aware of an unseen presence beside him. At first he is terrified, thinking it is a ghost, and asks this presence to go away, blurting out "Oh I am the unluckiest person in the whole world!"

The unseen presence responds by breathing his warm breath on Shasta, saying: "There, that is not the breath of a ghost. Tell me your sorrows."

Shasta is reassured and tells him of all his troubles. Aslan listens, waiting till he has finished, and then responds, opening Shasta's mind to see everything in a completely new way. It is only after this, that the mist clears, and Shasta sees Aslan clearly, and falls humbly but joyfully at his feet.

The parallels are clear. Like Jesus, Aslan appears but is hidden. He reassures Shasta and invites him to tell him his troubles. He listens first and then responds, and finally reveals himself when Shasta is ready.

So I believe the Emmaus story tells us how Jesus comes alongside us in our lives, meeting us where we are, inviting us to share our troubles with him, and then opening our minds to see everything in a new way.

This story also tells us how we, as individuals and as a church, can share our faith with those around us. We are invited to come alongside others as a friend, to meet with them where they are, and to listen. And our role I believe is not to load them up with our agenda, but to respect their journey, and just to do what we can, through our words and our prayers, to enable them to step forward on their journey of faith, and to discover more of the love and the purposes of God.

And that I believe is a beautiful calling, the calling to come alongside others as a friend, both to listen, and also not to be afraid to share our own experiences of the love of God in our lives. But above all, as we continue on this long journey through the COVID-19 crisis, may we ourselves be aware of the risen Jesus walking alongside us, Jesus our friend who meets us where we are, who listens to us, and who opens our minds to see everything differently, lit up by the light of his wise and loving purposes for us all.

Amen

The Intercessions

Isolation does not need to mean loneliness

Lord, may we be always aware of your presence with us at this challenging time - and your love uniting us. We give thanks for the many acts of kindness which have taken place during this time of social distancing. We pray that they may continue when life returns to normal and that we may become a more caring society with more time for others.

Weekday commemorations: Catherine of Sienna, teacher, died 1380; Philip and James, Apostles; Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, teacher, died 373

We give thanks and pray for the worldwide Church, its peace & unity, and pray for fellow-Christians facing hostility & persecution.

We pray for Clergy and Church Administrators worried about the financial problems that the COVID-19 outbreak are causing.

In the Deanery we pray for: our Archdeacons and the staff at Diocesan Church House. We pray for the Coptic Congregation, especially those members who would normally worship in St Peter's Church once a month.

We give thanks for our local community with its opportunities for friendship & service, praying for neighbours who live or work in:-Harbord Road, Priors Forge, Harefields, David Walter Close, Templar Road, Riddell Place, Holt Weir Close.

Locally we pray for: Wolvercote Young People's Club, Wolvercote Morris, North Oxford Folk Dance Group.

We pray that international leaders may seek a just & lasting peace in areas of conflict, and for all people involved in trying to control the spread of the COVID-19.

We pray for victims of state-sponsored violence or terrorist activity, refugees & asylum seekers.

We give thanks for God's creation and our environment – we pray for all people involved in protecting the environment, and for wisdom and guidance to be good stewards of our beautiful earth and to look after the creatures in it.

Nationally we continue to pray for our Prime Minister, Cabinet, for the NHS and all care workers. We give thanks for all who work hard to keep life as normal as it can be including shop workers, delivery drivers, refuse collectors, bus and train drivers and postal workers.

We pray for all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit, and for those affected by COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.

Amongst those who have asked for our prayers: Margaret Williams, Jenny Gerrard, Trixie Collier, Ray Voss, Marion Boulton, Vicki Shepstone, John Waugh, Margaret Ewert and Lyn Dean. Amongst those cared for away from home: Valerie Barnish, Tom Ekin, James. We pray for all in care homes at this worrying time.

We remember with thanksgiving those who have died recently, including Tim Bravington, We pray also for their families & friends.

Amongst those who died about this time in earlier years we remember: Anne Walker, Mary Ledger, Claire Ballard, Leslie Collins and Audrey Hughes.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers. for the sake of your Son. our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

The Peace

The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and said,
'Peace be with you.'

Then were they glad when they saw the Lord.

The peace of the risen Christ be always with you

All and also with you.

The Lord is here.

All His Spirit is with us.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

Almighty God, good Father to us all,
your face is turned towards your world.

In love you gave us Jesus your Son
to rescue us from sin and death.

Your Word goes out to call us home to the city where angels sing your praise.

We join with them in heaven's song:

Holy, holy, holy Lord,

God of power and might,

heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Father of all, we give you thanks for every gift that comes from heaven.

To the darkness Jesus came as your light.

With signs of faith and words of hope

he touched untouchables with love and washed the guilty clean.

This is his story.

This is our song:

Hosanna in the highest.

The crowds came out to see your Son, yet at the end they turned on him.

On the night he was betrayed

he came to table with his friends to celebrate the freedom of your people.

This is his story.

This is our song:

Hosanna in the highest.

Jesus blessed you, Father, for the food;

he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and said:

This is my body, given for you all.

Jesus then gave thanks for the wine;

he took the cup, gave it and said:

This is my blood, shed for you all for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this in remembrance of me.

This is our story.

This is our song:

Hosanna in the highest.

Therefore, Father, with this bread and this cup
we celebrate the cross
on which he died to set us free.
Defying death he rose again
and is alive with you to plead for us and all the world.
This is our story.

**This is our song:
Hosanna in the highest.**

Send your Spirit on us now
that by these gifts we may feed on Christ with opened eyes and hearts on fire.
May we and all who share this food
offer ourselves to live for you
and be welcomed at your feast in heaven where all creation worships you,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit:
**Blessing and honour and glory and power
be yours for ever and ever. Amen.**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray
**All Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Alleluia. Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.
All Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.

We invite you to join in at home with this prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, since I cannot at this time receive communion, I pray you to come into my heart. I unite myself with you and embrace you with all my heart, my soul, and my mind. Let nothing separate me from you; let me serve you in this life until, by your grace, I come to your glorious kingdom and unending peace. Amen.

Post Communion Prayer

Let us pray
Living God, your Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread: open the eyes of our faith, that we may see him in all his redeeming work;
who is alive and reigns, now and for ever.
Amen.

The Blessing

God the Father,
by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead,
strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life;
And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

The Dismissal

Go in the peace of Christ. Alleluia, alleluia!
Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia!

Hymn: Loves redeeming work is done

1 Love's redeeming work is done;
fought the fight, the battle won:
lo, our Sun's eclipse is o'er,
lo, he sets in blood no more.

2 Vain the stone, the watch, the seal;
Christ has burst the gates of hell;
death in vain forbids his rise;
Christ has opened paradise.

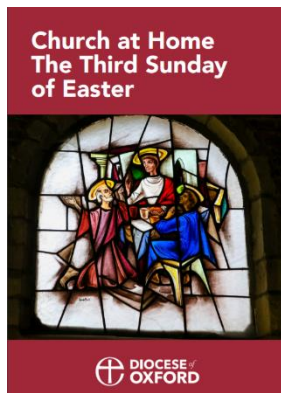
3 Lives again our glorious King;
where, O death, is now thy sting?

dying once, he all doth save;
where thy victory, O grave?

4 Soar we now where Christ has led,
following our exalted Head;
made like him, like him we rise;
ours the cross, the grave, the skies.

5 Hail the Lord of earth and heaven!
Praise to thee by both be given:
thee we greet triumphant now;
hail, the Resurrection Thou!

NOTICES



The **Diocese of Oxford** makes live-streamed worship available for everyone. Services are available at 10:00am every Sunday, Tomorrow Sunday 26 April at 10:00am Bishop Olivia will be presiding.

From this week the service is available to people dialling in by phone. The number to dial each week is 01865 920930.

Press 0 for the short service and 1 for the full Church at Home service. It will take a few seconds to retrieve the recording then the service will start.

The Quarterly – Because of lockdown, the next Quarterly will be produced in electronic form. Hard copies will be printed when current restrictions are lifted for those who would like one, and for our records. Contributions, including book reviews, are welcomed, preferably by e-mail, to any of the editors, Ann Stedman (ann.stedman@btinternet.com), Michael Daniell (michaeldaniell51@gmail.com) and John Harding (john.harding22@gmail.com). Submission deadline is Sunday 17 May. If possible, your contribution should not exceed 600 words. The Editors

The Flying Goose - copy deadline Wed 20 May. The next issue, due end of May, will be produced in electronic form and available for download from St Peter's website news section. Contact the Editor for May, Stephen Drew (flying.goose.ed@gmail.com), to reserve space.