

**Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2021 10.30am**

**Jesus appears to Thomas**

Led by Sarah Brooks, Linda Press and Shirley Henderson

**Call to Worship:**

Thank you (Steward) Welcome everyone, good morning.

Heavenly Creator, Lord of all, we come to worship you,

Jesus, the Christ risen from the dead, we come to encounter you.

God who is Spirit, moving amongst us, we come to take inspiration from you.

Come amongst us God.

**Hymn: StF 28 Jesus calls us here to meet him**

1. Jesus calls us here to meet him,  
As through word and song and prayer  
We affirm Gods promised presence  
Where his people live and care  
Praise the God who keeps his promise  
Praise the son who calls us friends  
Praise the spirit who among us  
To our hopes and fears attends

2. Jesus calls us to confess him  
Word of life and Lord of all  
Sharer of our flesh and frailness  
Saving all who fail of fall

tell his holy human story  
tell his tales that all may hear  
tell the world that Christ in glory  
came to earth to meet us here

3. Jesus calls us to each other  
Vastly different though we are  
Creed and colour, class and gender  
Neither limit not debar  
Join the hand of friend and stranger  
Join the hand of age and youth  
Join the faithful and the doubter  
In their common search for truth

**Opening Prayers**

Lord Jesus Christ, you are not only risen and alive, you are with us wherever we may be.

You stand above all that is best in life, as its source. We praise you for the beauty of the natural world, as spring unfolds around us.

You stand above all that is worst, as the ultimate victor. Thank you for the hope you give us and for your presence with us whatever we may be facing.

You stand above all failure, weakness, doubt and despair, as forgiveness and unconditional love. You are our Lord and our Friend. O Lord our God, we worship and adore you.

As we think today of those early Christians who generously shared all they had, we want to say sorry for all the things we fail to do.

We admit that we do not always listen to you, and we allow the noise and business of our daily activity to shut you out.

Lord please forgive us and help us to do better.

In Christ we are set free. Through Christ we are forgiven.

In Christ all things are held together. Thanks be to God.

Amen

### **Lord's Prayer**

**Reading: John 20: 19 - 31**

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' <sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

<sup>21</sup> Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' <sup>22</sup> And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'

#### **Jesus appears to Thomas**

<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas (also known as Didymus<sup>[a]</sup>), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!'

But he said to them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.'

<sup>26</sup> A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.'

<sup>28</sup> Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!'

<sup>29</sup> Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'

#### **The purpose of John's gospel**

<sup>30</sup> Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. <sup>31</sup> But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

### **Talk 1: Doubtful Thomas**

When someone tells us something we think is unlikely, we sometimes say, "I'll believe that that when I see it!" and that was Thomas's reaction.

This is what he might have told his friends afterwards.

The other day some of my group were gathered together, and for once I wasn't there, I'd just popped out for something. Anyway, when I got back, the place was in uproar.

"What's going on?" I asked. "He came back" they said. "He came back? Who are you talking about?" "Jesus" they said, "We've seen Jesus, here, just now".

I mean, isn't it typical, when I'd just popped out? I admit I was doubtful, extremely doubtful. Well it's hardly surprising is it when you consider the events of the last few days. It was a highly dubious tale. I was expecting Peter or James to suddenly jump up and say "Aha – only kidding." But they didn't; they were all too busy jumping around like maniacs.

"Oh, I'll believe," I told them. "I'll believe when I see the nail wounds in his hands and put my fingers into them. When I place my hand into his side, then I'll believe." I admit I doubted, but I wanted to believe, I really did.

The next week or so was tough. I wanted what all the others had, but I couldn't quite grasp hold of it.

And then he appeared, in that same room. I don't know how – the doors were all locked – but there he was standing there looking right at me. He knew. He knew what I'd said about wanting to put my hands into his wounds. And he offered.

I could have touched those wounds, but I didn't. I didn't need to.

So am I ashamed of my doubts? Not really – they served a purpose, caused me to question. Much better to have honest doubts than just go along with the crowd, I reckon. And he understood that; I really believe he understood.

**Hymn: StF 316 When Easter to the dark world came**

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| 1. When Easter to the dark world came,<br>Fair flowers glowed like scarlet flame:<br>At Eastertide, at Eastertide,<br>O glad was the world at Eastertide. | At Eastertide, at Eastertide,<br>O glad was the world at Eastertide.  |
| 2. When Mary in the garden walked,<br>And with her risen Master talked:<br>At Eastertide, at Eastertide,<br>O glad was the world at Eastertide.           | 5. When Thomas' heart was hurt and grieved<br>Then Jesus wounds his doubt relieved:<br>At Eastertide, at Eastertide,<br>O glad was the world at Eastertide. |
| 3. When John and Peter in their gloom<br>Met angels at the empty tomb:<br>At Eastertide, at Eastertide,<br>O glad was the world at Eastertide.            | 6. And friend to friend in wonder said:<br>'The Lord is risen from the dead!'<br>At Eastertide, at Eastertide,<br>O glad was the world at Eastertide.       |
| 4. When ten disciples met in fear,<br>Then 'Peace" said Jesus, I am here,   | 7. This Eastertide with joyful voice<br>We'll sing: 'The Lord is King! Rejoice!'<br>At Eastertide, at Eastertide,<br>O sing, all the world, for Eastertide. |

**Reading: Acts 4: 32 – 35**

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common.<sup>33</sup> With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.<sup>34</sup> There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold.<sup>35</sup> They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

**Talk 2: Reflection on the readings**

And so, today, we find ourselves one week on from Easter Sunday. One week on from remembering the great Good News of Easter Sunday, and one year on from another Easter that was not normal for our church. We remember that we live now in the light of the risen Christ, but still in the midst of a pandemic.

We take a moment to reflect on the week just passed. Perhaps you enjoyed the last hot cross bun, perhaps we greeted others while out for our daily walk; and perhaps we felt sad that we could not see family as we would normally have done.

Psalm 133, which is the Psalm set for today opens with the words, "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!" Although, over the past year, many have had to be on their own, we know that we are not alone in believing the good news of Easter Sunday.

In our reading from John's Gospel, the disciples find themselves quite literally living after Jesus' resurrection. Jesus has died and risen again, and has been seen by those first few people on Easter morning. The disciples stand, gathered together. Suddenly, Jesus "came and stood among them and said "Peace be with you"." Where they are gathered, Jesus is in the midst of them.

But the disciples aren't all gathered together because of their shared belief of the Good News that Jesus is risen. In fact, they are gathered together in fear. They are huddled together behind locked doors. They have shut themselves off for fear of what the outside world might bring to a group of people who believe in the Good News.

But when Jesus comes into this place of fear with them, he transforms it. "Peace be with you" he says, and then "As the father has sent me, so I have sent you". Jesus calls them not to be gathered behind locked doors but to go out into the world.

And, as we know from the rest of the New Testament, they do just that. The disciples go out into the world and share with others the Good News of the risen Christ which brings them together.

Our reading from the book of Acts paints a picture of what this looked like in practice. Here, we find the disciples once again gathered together as people "of one heart and mind". Their unity in belief of the Good News holds them together. But, perhaps surprisingly, their unity goes beyond belief. Not only are they concerned with sharing their belief in testimony, but in sharing their physical lives together too. The passage tells of how, among the gathered believers, "there was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need." Living together means sharing not only a concern for one another's faith, but for one another's quality of life. In fact, in this example the two are closely bound together. Caring for one another's spiritual flourishing and physical flourishing together become a response to the good news.

When we talk about evangelism, sharing the good news, how often do we think of evangelism which seeks to meet both spiritual and physical wellbeing? During the pandemic, many churches across the country have become deeply involved with mutual aid groups, and offering emergency provision. Perhaps you have been

involved in the distribution of food parcels to families in your local community.

Many people in this Church have been involved in practical ways of supporting the NHS with mask extenders, scrubs, wash bags and hand cream. Is this evangelism? Perhaps, by the example set in this passage from Acts, this is one way in which we live together in and share the Good News. Perhaps the foodbank is not somewhere where belief is even mentioned. Does this stop the handing over of a food parcel being Good News?

The gospel is shared in the sanctuary and the foodbank, the housing association and the prayer gathering.

**Prayers:        Intercession**

We thank you that your Good News means fullness of life.

We thank you that each moment of our lives is transformed by you.

From our daily bread to our time spent in prayer with one another.  
In our togetherness, you dwell among us.

Merciful God

We are sorry for the times when we have hidden behind closed doors,  
more concerned with protecting our faith than sharing it.

And yet when you come amongst us you fill us with peace  
and courage to respond to your calling to go into the world.

Helps us to be courageous today,  
to hear and respond to you.

Loving God

We thank you that we can meet you in foodbank and sanctuary,  
That you are transforming each aspect of our lives.

Helps us to recognise the role we each play in sharing your Good News

That all of your beloved children may be brought into fullness of life.

We pray for your world, and for all who need to know something of the Easter hope  
this day, O Lord.

Come, by your Spirit.

Amen.

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**Hymn: StF 462 Come with me come wander**

Come with me, come wander, come welcome the world,  
where strangers might smile or where stones may be hurled,  
come leave what you cling to, lay down what you clutch  
and find, with hands empty, that hearts can hold much.

*Sing hey for the carpenter leaving his tools,*

*Sing hey for the Pharisees leaving their rules*

*Sing hey for the fishermen leaving their nets*

*Sing hey for the people who leave their regrets*

Come walk in my company, come sleep by my side  
come saviour a lifestyle with nothing to hide

come sit at my table and eat with my friends,  
discovering that love which the world never ends.  
*Sing hey for the carpenter leaving his tools....*

Come share in my laughter, come close to my fears,  
come find yourself washed with the kiss of my tears:  
come stand close at hand while I suffer and die  
and find in three days how I never will lie  
*Sing hey for the carpenter leaving his tools....*

Come leave your possessions, come share out your treasure,  
come give and receive without method or measure,  
come loose every bond that's resisting the Spirit,  
enabling the earth to be yours to inherit.  
*Sing hey for the carpenter leaving his tools....*

### **Closing words & Blessing**

**Sending Hymn: StF 347 Crown him with many crowns**