

Christ Church and the Bridgwater Drive Church, 18 April 2021

Music to start – instrumental introduction to Psalm 4 (see below)

Welcome to the joint worship for Christ Church and The Bridgwater Drive Church. Today will be a Communion service so please have bread and wine or juice ready for us to share in the Lord's Table each in our own homes.

Call to worship (inspired by Psalm 4)

Hear us when we call to you, O God,
For you are our righteousness and grace.
Hear us when we call, O God,
in outrage and distress,
for you put gladness into our hearts
and peace in the soul.
You are our safety and our balm;
on you we wait to see new dawns.

**This is the day the Lord has made, we shall rejoice and be glad in it.
Christ is Risen, Alleluia!**

Hymn New every morning (R&S 536) <https://youtu.be/QPZn-4ZyGJI>

New every morning is the love
our waking and uprising prove;
through sleep and darkness safely brought,
restored to life and power and thought.

If on our daily course our mind
be set to hallow all we find,
new treasures still, of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice.

New mercies, each returning day,
hover around us while we pray;
new perils past, new sins forgiven,
new thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven.

The trivial round, the common task,
will furnish all we ought to ask:
room to deny ourselves; a road
to bring us daily nearer God

Prayers of Lament and of Confession

This prayer of lament inspired by Psalm 4 is written by Ruth Jarman. In it, she envisions “the enemy’ being climate change or ‘the powers that be’ that are causing it.”

“Answer me when I call to you, O my righteous God.
Give me relief from my distress; be merciful to me and hear my prayer.”
How long, O men and women, will you turn the glory of the earth into dangerous pollution?
How long will we love the delusion of consumerism and seek the false gods of money and possessions?
Help us to remember that you have set apart the godly for yourself;
that you will hear us when we call to you.
In our exasperation and anxiety do not let us lose hope; when we have quiet times in the day,
let us search our hearts and be silent. Help us to live our lives sacrificially and to trust in the Lord.
Many are asking, “What is the point? The earth is finished. Who can save us now?”

“Let the light of your face shine upon us, O Lord.
You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound.
I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.” **Amen**

We listen to a sung version of Psalm 4, from the #psalmsproject:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEbhc07wOug>

Almighty God — creator, shaper and sustainer of all life,
We confess that we have not loved you with our whole hearts;
We have been careless with the creation you so lovingly crafted,

and deaf to its song of praise.

We have taken to satisfy our selfish desires, rather than our need and been indifferent to the consequences as your world's song of praise has been silenced. Because of our greed and carelessness, the world is hurting, and many of your most vulnerable children are suffering as a result. Please forgive our indifference.

Almighty God — creator, shaper and sustainer of all life.

Thank you for the forgiveness won for us by your Son – the redeemer of all creation.

We receive your grace to us, and your love for us as we are. Change us now into what you would have us be – Move us to love and care for your world and make us ready to work for the good of all creation through the love and power of your son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen**

www.thesanctuarycentre.org

Offertory

You are reminded to send in your gifts for the work of the church by cheque or bank transfer.

Holy One, receive our gifts by your grace.

Multiply and use them through the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish Christ's work of love in the world. **Amen.**

Bible reading: Acts 3: 1-20

Why does the lectionary give us only verses 12-19 – the section maligning the Jews? Why does the lectionary give us the 'bad news' of blaming the Jews, yet again, for the crucifixion of Jesus – "you killed the Author of life", rather than the 'good' and exciting news of Peter and John healing a man lame from birth? Then the writer of Acts digs the hole even deeper – "I know that you acted out of ignorance". So not only does he call the Israelites murderers, but they are stupid too - before he calls them to repent and turn to God so that their sins might be wiped out. As an evangelistic strategy it doesn't sound that effective! It's probably best not to offend your audience before you tell them to repent of their crimes and come round to your way of thinking and join your new church! As I've said, I'm sure many times before, it's all about perception. What would the Jews back then have heard? What do we hear now in this story? What is Luke's intention with Peter's speech? Hopefully, these days we would be a bit more politically correct and sensitive, but Peter's speeches in Acts, (this is the second of three) are a clear expression of the gospel and present us with several lessons. They all have similar themes, indicating that like other writers of the period, Luke, the author of Acts, uses speeches not to convey the exact words of the speakers but their significance. The speeches ground themselves in the story of Israel. Here Peter presents Jesus as having been "glorified" by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. When addressing other Jews, these speeches of Peter always include condemnation for Jesus' death, which we must accept has been misused and caused anti-Jewish feeling down the years. But, we should be mindful that Peter was himself Jewish; he was speaking to his own people. We have lost the sense of what is, in a way, a family argument, an in-house conversation, but Peter captures a reality for all people – people often do act in ignorance or malice, killing the innocent and allowing murderers to go free. We can see it throughout history – think of demonstrators killed by police, civil rights activists assassinated,

whistle-blowers silenced – and we see it today in the fact that rarely are police officers convicted when they kill people, either by accident or deliberately.

Peter and John carry with them the memory of the crowd that called for Jesus' death, but the point they make now highlights not the actions of the many, but the actions of the One – Jesus, in whose name the lame man has been healed. The healed man is now the sign of the One resurrected, the author of life itself and the crowd flock to him utterly astonished. Peter's speech responds to their amazement and seeks to explain what has happened. The actions of Jesus, in this particular instance via Peter and John, confront the actions of the many. If people have a tendency to be seduced by the power of violence and take up the weapons of death, here is Jesus who has overcome violence and death. Here is a Messiah who heals, restores and gives life.

But let us go back for a moment, to the start of chapter 3, the bit the compilers of the lectionary didn't see fit to include. The gate of the temple is where people go to beg from worshippers entering the temple, maybe hoping that on the way to pray their consciences will be pricked enough to take some coins from their pockets too. In the book of Acts, the gate of the temple becomes the entrance to a new future. In the doorway to worship are those whose very presence should discipline praise and guide hope. Before they sing praises to God, the poor, lame and sick must be seen and acknowledged. The lame man lies in the path toward praise and lies in the path of disciples. This man is the person Jesus sees and demands his disciples see. This lame man was also a daily reminder of the need of Israel and of us today – a need for healing and for a moment of divine revelation. Peter demands that the man look at them. The man does look; their eyes meet indicating the ever-present imbalance between haves and have-nots. Although in this case Peter and John are not the 'haves', at least not in an economic sense. They have something much better to offer than money – the poor and needy will not be overlooked. At the start of the ministry of the followers of Jesus all people are fully seen and heard and cared for. This is the gospel of the book of Acts. We heard last week how no need went unmet, now no disability or pain goes unseen.

In the name of Jesus, this disabled human being is touched by his God, his creator, and given strength to his limbs and the crowd sees and is amazed. Peter asks them, why are you amazed at this, why do you stare at us? We are not the ones who have healed this man; Jesus the Author of life has done it. These words invoke Jesus' divine identity. Peter is absolutely clear as to the source of healing power. His healing command is, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk". Peter's insistence upon Jesus' name will get him and John into trouble. The following day, in chapter four, the authorities arrest the two disciples and interrogate them, demanding to know by whose authority they act. They are set free on condition that they do not speak or preach in the name of Jesus, but they do not cease to proclaim Jesus as Messiah. This is what an Easter church looks like - healing, proclaiming, and persevering. And we are an Easter church too. Were that we too saw clearly the disabled, needy and suffering among us. Were that we too ensured no need was left unmet. Were too that we were constantly proclaiming the name of Jesus, just like the early church.

Hymn When I needed a neighbour <https://youtu.be/pXiHcpsMJxs>
by Sydney Carter, © Stainer and Bell, sung by the Sloane Square Chamber Choir, permission given

When I needed a neighbour
Were you there, were you there?
When I needed a neighbour, were you there?
And the creed and the colour
And the name won't matter
Were you there?

I was cold, I was naked
Were you there, were you there?
I was cold, I was naked, were you there?
And the creed and the colour
And the name won't matter
Were you there?

I was hungry and thirsty
Were you there, were you there?
I was hungry and thirsty, were you there?
And the creed and the colour
And the name won't matter
Were you there?

When I needed a shelter
Were you there, were you there?
When I needed a shelter were you there?
And the creed and the colour
And the name won't matter
Were you there?

Lord's Supper as you follow at home, please say the words in bold

We remember, as we do at every communion service, the gift of the life and death of God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us not be doubtful like Thomas, but firm believers like Peter and John, proclaiming the name of the Risen Lord!

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Loving God, the world you made is beautiful and full of wonder.

You made us, with all your creatures, and you love all that you have made.

You gave us the words of your prophets, the stories of your people throughout the generations, and the gathered wisdom of many years.

You gave us Jesus, your Son, to be born and to grow up in difficult times where there was little peace.

He embraced people with your love and told stories to change us all.

He healed those in pain and brought to life those who had lost hope.

He made friends with anyone who would listen and loved even his enemies.

For these things, he suffered. For these things, he died.

And he was raised from death and lives with you forever.

You give us your Holy Spirit, to teach and to strengthen us,

to remind us of Jesus Christ and to make us one in him.

For all these gifts we thank you, and join with all your people on earth and in heaven, in joyful praise, saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord

God of power and might,

heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

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

Hosanna in the highest.

This is the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died
Christ is risen
Christ will come again.**

Send your Holy Spirit upon this bread and wine,
and upon your people, that Christ may be with us,
and we may be ready to live for you
and do what you ask of us, today and every day to come. **Amen**

On the night when he was betrayed, Jesus took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body which is broken for you. Do this is remembrance of me. In the same way he took the cup after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Sharing of bread and wine

Prayer after communion

Most gracious God, we thank you for what you have given us.
You have fed us with the bread of life and renewed us for your service.
Now we give ourselves to you, and ask that our daily living
may be part of the life of your kingdom,
and that our love may be your love
reaching out into the life of the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Prayers of intercession

Gracious God, we pray today, for all those who go hungry and for the people who help them,
through volunteering at foodbanks, by donating food and money, or by speaking out and raising
awareness.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for the NHS and care home staff, for doctors, nurses, porters and cleaners, carers and
their families, as they battle tiredness and depression to keep going.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for all people in leadership, locally, nationally and around the world that they may act with
wisdom to bring about and maintain peace and order. We pray for the police, here and around the
world, that they may learn to treat all people equally without prejudice and that they be more caring
to those with disabilities or mental illness, and more respectful of women.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for those who feel lonely and sad, not able to see family or friends. And we pray for wisdom
and patience to not rush our progress to less restrictions. We pray for all those who have had
COVID-19 or lost a loved one to the virus and for those whose treatment for other conditions has
been delayed.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for all those who are ill and those who care for them; for those awaiting test results or
treatment, for the dying and those who mourn. May your infinite love and grace surround them and
bring them peace, in Jesus' name.

May your loving presence known to those who are lonely. Give your strengthening power to those
who are weak. May those who lack be filled, those who mourn be comforted, those who worry be
calmed and those who seek forgiveness find it in Jesus Christ; in whose name we now pray

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn Now let us from this table rise (R&S 463) recorded by Thora last August

Now let us from this table rise
renewed in body, mind, and soul;
with Christ we die and rise again,
his selfless love has made us whole.

To fill each human house with love,
it is sacrament of care;
the work that Christ began to do
we humbly pledge ourselves to share.

With minds alert, upheld by grace,
to spread the Word in speech and deed
we follow in the steps of Christ,
at one with all in hope and need.

Then grant us grace, Companion-God,
to choose again the pilgrim way,
and help us to accept with joy
the challenge of tomorrow's day.

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Blessing

May God bless us with anger at injustice, oppression and exploitation of people,
so that we will work for justice, equity and peace.

May God bless us with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation and war,
so that we will reach out to comfort them and change their pain to joy.

And may God bless us with the foolishness to think that we can make a difference in the world,
so that we will do the things which others tell you cannot be done.

And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all now and ever more. Amen

Music to end: Sent by the Lord am I © WGRG The Iona Community
The version used for the Autumn 2020 Christian Aid appeal <https://youtu.be/eJTRtPdSYM>

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