

Service Sunday 24th April 2022 Rayleigh

'God's transforming power at work in God's people'

Call to worship

We hear words from the Book of Revelation chapter 1:

Grace and peace to you from the One who is and was and is coming. Jesus is the faithful witness, the first among those raised from the dead. He is the ruler of the Kings of the earth. He is the one who loves us, who made us free from our sins with the blood of his death. To Jesus Christ be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.

Opening Prayer

O God, First and Last, maker of life and death,
we depend on your grace.

O God, who sets us free and lifts us high,
we give you glory and honour and praise.

O God you are with us, so all can see: those who praise you and those who would destroy you.

We turn and know your truth.

For you are the First and the Last, and you are with us now.

Strengthen us for this moment.

Song – Come people of the risen King WF 21

Come, people of the Risen King
Who delight to bring Him praise
Come all and tune your hearts to sing
To the Morning Star of grace
From the shifting shadows of the earth
We will lift our eyes to Him
Where steady arms of mercy reach
To gather children in

Rejoice, rejoice! Let every tongue rejoice!
One heart, one voice; O Church of Christ, rejoice!

Come, those whose joy is morning sun
And those weeping through the night
Come, those who tell of battles won
And those struggling in the fight
For His perfect love will never change
And His mercies never cease
But follow us through all our days
With the certain hope of peace

Come, young and old from every land
Men and women of the faith
Come, those with full or empty hands
Find the riches of His grace

Over all the world, His people sing
Shore to shore we hear them call
The Truth that cries through every age:
"Our God is all in all!"

Keith & Kristyn Getty & Stuart Townend

Prayers of thanksgiving and confession

This is the day that starts a week
This is the day of rising
This is the day that starts new life
This is the day to sing for joy
For Christ our Lord, though killed on a cross is now alive for ever.
And so we gather to rejoice and give thanks
that this day and all our days
are lived in the light of that hope.
In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

And we continue in prayer.

Forgive us, Lord Jesus, that, like your first disciples,
we have so little faith,
we harbour many doubts,
we hide away in fear.

Grant us the gift of the Holy Spirit, revealer of all truth,
that our fears may be overcome,
our doubts resolved,
and our faith quickened;
and that we may live in the power of your resurrection.
We ask it for your name's sake.

Amen

Lord's Prayer

Theme introduction

Song – Stand up, clap hands, shout thank you WF 86

*Stand up clap hands shout thank you, lord,
Thank you for the world were in.
Stand up clap hands shout thank you, lord,
for happiness and peace within.*

I look around and the suns in the sky
I look around and i think 'Oh my!'
The world is such a wonderful place,
And all because of the good Lord's grace.

I look around and the creatures i see,
I look around and it amazes me,
That every fox and bird and hare
Must fit in a special place somewhere.

I look around at all the joy I've had,
I look around and then it makes me glad
That i can offer thanks and praise
To him who guides me through my days.

Roger Dyer

Children leave – share the Grace

Offering and prayer

Bible reading –John 20: 19-31

Talk

Loving God, draw near to us and speak to us we pray, guide our thoughts and fill our hearts with your word for us. In Jesus' name we ask. Amen.

Last Sunday we celebrated the high point of the Christian year as we heard once again the description of Jesus rising from death. Following his crucifixion, the 2 disciples went to the tomb early on Sunday morning and discovered that Jesus' body was no longer there. Mary Magdalene then encountered the risen Jesus in the garden. And yet our reading this morning is in stark contrast. On the evening of that same day, the day of Jesus' rising from the tomb, we find the disciples in a state of fear, confusion and a total lack of understanding about what is happening. We read that 'the disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jews'.

We can imagine that the disciples were experiencing a whole range of emotions as they huddled together behind closed doors. Fear, confusion, uncertainty about the future, a sense of total loss, no idea what their role and purpose is from this point on, no sense of direction, feeling traumatised and very vulnerable.

Without wishing to labour the point, perhaps we can relate to some extent to the reaction of the disciples. We've experienced a prolonged time of upheaval and uncertainty over the past 2 years due to COVID and even now we're still emerging into the new world beyond the virus with a continuing lack of direction and certainty. Perhaps our faith has taken a knock. Perhaps we feel scared and unsure of what the future holds for us. Maybe God feels distant at this time.

Into the midst of fear and confusion, Jesus appears. Into the midst of doubt and hopelessness, Jesus appears. Jesus doesn't come to confront the disciples with their failures. Instead he sees that they are fearful and have lost all hope and he comes to restore and transform them.

Jesus' appearance to the disciples enables them to start the process of transformation. Jesus gives them 3 essential building blocks that will be the foundations for a new life centred on continuing Jesus' ministry – the building blocks of peace, purpose and power.

First Jesus offers them peace. Jesus meets the disciples as they are – in a state of shock, frightened, anxious and disturbed. He comes to them and offers them peace. His greeting “peace be with you” carries the sense of the Hebrew greeting “shalom” and is a blessing that means much more than just a friendly greeting or a sense of inner tranquillity. The peace that Jesus offers brings a deep and all-embracing sense of well-being. The word shalom represents a vision of peace and spiritual well-being that is grounded in a relationship with God and is reflected in all aspects of life – economic, political and religious. The peace that Jesus offers his disciples is something far deeper and more significant than a simple feeling. Earlier in John’s gospel Jesus describes the kind of peace that he offers when he tells the disciples “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid”. This is peace not only when things are going well but also in times of upheaval and when the future is far from clear.

How can we allow the risen Jesus to come alongside us and speak his Easter peace into our hearts today and every day? You should have on your chair a picture of a Celtic knot. A Celtic Knot is a symbolic pattern of a looped knot that has no start or finish. The looped pattern goes on infinitely, which is thought to symbolise the eternity of life. The particular knot that you’re looking at is a Shield knot which represents defence and protection. The compact style of this knot intentionally resembles a shield, with its overlapping lines leaving little empty space within and the curved outer corners enclosing the knot.

This knot can also be seen as a symbol of God’s unending love and peace with us to shield and protect us. I invite you to run your finger around the pattern of the knot and as you do so, to focus on God’s unending peace which is present with you at all times. And while you do that, listen to these words from Paul’s letter to the Philippians where he encourages the Christians in that community with these words - Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Next Jesus provides the disciples with a new purpose for their lives. Following the turmoil of the events that have surrounded the disciples, it’s easy to imagine that they are desperately looking for some meaning and direction in the midst of all this confusion and uncertainty. Jesus’ words to the disciples offer them a new purpose for their lives – “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you”. He offers them a purpose that will restore their own sense of value and self-worth, that will be all-consuming and which will transform not only their lives but also the lives of countless people through the ages. Jesus sends the disciples to continue his mission of revealing God to the world. As Jesus was sent by the Father to save the world so he now sends the disciples out to spread the same message of God’s love and salvation to all people everywhere. Jesus calls us not for a quiet, leisurely life but for an active mission that faces challenges, problems and trials. Our God sends us out to work for God’s purpose for the world. God calls us to share God’s compassion and to reveal God’s love. This calling of Jesus will become the driving force and priority behind all that the disciples do from this point on and must be our driving force and over-riding purpose too. We are called to be Easter people, to be Jesus’ hands and feet where we are.

And thirdly Jesus gives his disciples the power they will need in order to carry out this calling. The disciples aren’t left on their own to carry out this task in their own strength.

Jesus has already promised to send another Advocate who will be with them forever – the Spirit of truth. Jesus has told the disciples previously that the Holy Spirit will teach them all things and will remind them of everything that Jesus has said to them and guide them into all truth. Now Jesus fulfils that promise as he says to the disciples “Receive the Holy Spirit” and breathes into his disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We too can experience this same transformation and strengthening to serve our risen Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit. God’s Spirit will be seen at work in our lives through the various characteristics or fruit of the Spirit described by Paul in his letter to the Galatians. Paul says that the fruit that the Holy Spirit produces in the lives of the followers of Jesus is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. You can see these on the screen now if you want to focus on them for a moment.

We’re going to take a few moments now to reflect and to pray for God’s help to increase and develop the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. Think for a moment about which of the fruits of the Spirit God has already given to you to help you do God’s work in the world and give thanks to God for these.

(Silence)

Now think about which of the fruits of the Spirit you would like more of in your life and ask God to grow and strengthen these aspects in you.

(Silence)

You should have a fruit flavour boiled sweet on your chair. If you’d like to, pop your sweet in your mouth now and enjoy the flavour and allow God’s Spirit to fill you afresh this morning.

When the present and the future seem uncertain, when the things that have given our life meaning and purpose have been turned upside down, when what we took for granted seems to have been cruelly stripped away – it is in such times when our hope is at its lowest ebb that Jesus comes alongside us to fill our lives anew with a deep and unshakeable peace, with a sense of purpose and direction, and with the power and strength of the Holy Spirit to step out on a new path.

Jesus offered the disciples the opportunity to transform their shattered lives and to face the future with renewed hope. We too can experience that same hope in our lives as we are filled with the same peace, purpose and power which so transformed the lives of the disciples. Jesus brought new hope to the disciples when they feared all hope was gone. Jesus offers this new and living hope to us, whatever we may be facing in our lives in this moment. And he sends us out, filled with his peace and power, to bring his living hope to the people and places in our world that are most in need.

We are the people of the resurrection. Let us go out in the peace of the Lord to fulfil His purpose as He enables us by His power.

Thanks be to God

Amen

Song - Holy Spirit living breath of God WF 34

Holy Spirit, living breath of God,
Breathe new life into my willing soul.
Let the presence of the risen Lord,
Come renew my heart and make me whole.
Cause Your Word to come alive in me;
Give me faith for what I cannot see,
Give me passion for Your purity;
Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.

Holy Spirit, come abide within,
May Your joy be seen in all I do.
Love enough to cover every sin,
In each thought and deed and attitude.
Kindness to the greatest and the least,
Gentleness that sows the path of peace.
Turn my strivings into works of grace;
Breath of God show Christ in all I do.

Holy Spirit, from creation's birth,
Giving life to all that God has made,
Show Your power once again on earth,
Cause Your church to hunger for your ways.
Let the fragrance of our prayers arise;
Lead us on the road of sacrifice,
That in unity the face of Christ
May be clear for all the world to see.

Keith Getty & Stuart Townend

Prayers of Intercession

Sunday Club to share activities

Song - God is working His purpose out R&S 573

God is working his purpose out as year succeeds to year:
God is working his purpose out, and the time is drawing near;
nearer and nearer draws the time the time that shall surely be,
when the earth shall be filled with the glory of God
as the waters cover the sea.

From farthest east to farthest west, where human feet have trod,
by the voice of many messengers goes forth the voice of God:
'Give ear to me, you continents, you islands give ear to me,
that earth may be filled with the glory of God,
as the waters cover the sea.'

What can we do to work God's work, to prosper and increase
Love and justice throughout the world, the reign of the Prince of Peace?

What can we do to hasten the time, the time that shall surely be,
when the earth shall be filled with the glory of God
as the waters cover the sea?

Let us go forth in the strength of God, with the banner of Christ unfurled,
that the light of the glorious gospel of truth may shine throughout the world:
let us all fight with sorrow and sin, to set their captives free,
that the earth may be filled with the glory of God,
as the waters cover the sea.

All that we do can have no worth, unless God bless the deed;
vainly we hope for the harvest-tide, till God gives life to the seed;
yet nearer and nearer draws the time, the time that shall surely be,
when the earth shall be filled with the glory of God
as the waters cover the sea.

A C Ainger

Blessing

May the peace of God surround you and give you strength.

May the risen Jesus inspire you to a life of love and service.

And may the power of the Holy Spirit dwell in you and enable you to fulfil God's purpose
for your life

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Jesus

Amen

Hymns used under the Christ Church CCLI licence 63352
One License A-738739