**Morning Praise @ Home 7th April 2024**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Reading John 20: 19 – 31

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**Reflection from Philip**

Imagine the disciples, gathered in an upper room, trying to process their thoughts, their emotions reeling as they reflected on the events of the previous week.

It was only last Thursday that they had eaten with him, again in an upper room. He washed their feet. He broke bread and shared wine.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, they had prayed with Jesus, but exhausted, they had fallen asleep, leaving Jesus alone to confront the ordeal he knew lay ahead.

One of their own, Judas, had betrayed him. How could he? After all they had seen, all they had been through together. The guards had come and arrested Jesus. They fled in fear.

Even Peter, ‘The Rock, ' denied knowing Jesus or having anything to do with him when challenged. But they were ashamed that they would all have said the same thing. They were scared.

Then the trial, with trumped up charges, the involvement of the Roman governor. His torture. Seeing him forced to carry his cross up to Golgotha, the place of execution.

Seeing him there, alongside murderers, on the cross. His mother watching on. He died, and was buried in a stone tomb.

So they gathered in this upper room, hiding in fear, and then it happens. He appears. Jesus, whom they saw die, appeared among them! Can you imagine how they felt? Their Lord was alive! Here, with them! After all he had been through, he appears and says ‘*Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’*

Jesus wanted to reassure them. To let them know it really was him, and that he had forgiven them for everything they had done – and had failed to do, in those last days before his death….

He showed them the wounds in his hands, in his side….this was indeed their Lord Jesus, risen from the dead! Hallelujah!

Furthermore, despite their failings, he still had a mission for them – he wanted them to go out to the world and tell people about him, that their sins could be forgiven.

He breathed on them too, and said *‘Receive the Holy Spirit’*.

They felt such power, such authority, as he did that. This was the same Lord Jesus that they had followed, but now, risen from the dead, he had conquered death itself! He had also given them a mission, a purpose. This wasn’t the end, this was just the beginning!

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Can you imagine what must have been going through the minds of the disciples as they gathered in that upper room? Suddenly seeing Jesus, risen from the dead, among them, talking with them. Showing them his wounds, saying ‘Peace be with you’. Confirming he was sent by the Father, and then sending them on a mission, and breathing on them and telling them he was giving them the Holy Spirit.

In this passage from John, we often focus on Thomas, the one who missed this first appearance of Jesus to the disciples and doubted that it was Jesus, who needed the reassurance of seeing the wounds on Jesus’ body when he appeared again, a week later.

But this passage is really about **all** those scared, distraught disciples who were gathered in an upper room, behind a locked door.

In fact it’s about all of us, as we try to follow our faith and live as He would want us to. All of us who at times, might struggle with doubts, with fears, with our failures.

But in the middle of all our failings and guilt, Jesus comes to us and calmly says, ‘Peace be with you’. He offers a peace the world cannot give us, just when we need it.

Jesus wanted to reassure his disciples that he had risen, but he also had a message for them:

*‘As the Father has sent me, I am sending you!’*

Jesus wasn’t just there to prove his resurrection. He was sending his disciples out, to spread the good news that our sins can be forgiven, if we only acknowledge them and accept Him.

With that amazing grace that Christ’s death on the cross and resurrection has given us, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can all be free of guilt and sorrow. We can start to live life to the full, as individuals and as a church.

This is what our Lord wants for us. It’s what he wants for our church too – that empowered by his death on the cross, by his resurrection three days later, by his ‘grace’ and with the gift of the Holy Spirit, we can confidently go out into our community, into the wider world, and tell people that we worship a risen Lord, that the weight we have carried of all we have done wrong or failed him with, can be thrown aside. He carried that weight – the weight of the whole world, to the cross, for us.

The disciples were those Jesus had chosen to follow him and learn. That is what ‘disciple’ means—learners. They had followed, watched, listened, and learnt about him—about God’s purpose for us all and for our world.

Now they were being sent – that’s what ‘apostle’ means. ‘One who is sent. Jesus sent them out on a mission.

Jesus sends us ***all*** out into the world. We are part of an ‘apostolic’ or missionary Church.

But he didn’t send those original apostles on their mission alone. He told them *‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’*

He also breathed on them, foretelling the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

The Holy Spirit is also breathed on us, too. We are sent out, empowered with the Holy Spirit, to share the new life that Christ’s resurrection gives us with others.

When we have doubts and fears – as Thomas did, having missed that first meeting when Jesus appeared, Christ comes to us and says ‘*Peace be with you’.*

That peace and life to the full are there for us. There because Jesus died on that cross and rose again three days later. We just need to accept it, accept his grace, given for us, and let go of all our worries and regrets. We can live new lives, made new, in Him.

So may the Peace of our crucified and risen Lord, be with us all, **Amen**

**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession led by Ron**

Glorious God, we praise you for the resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ from the dead. Shed his wonderful light on all Christian people that we may live as those who believe in the triumph of the cross.

Almighty God we ask you to be a real and living presence in your church throughout the world. May this through its preaching and works of love continue to testify to our Lord’s resurrection.  Wherever we are lacking in faith and courage strengthen us with your Spirit.

**Lord, in your mercy: hear our prayer.**

**O God of all justice and peace we cry out to you in the midst of the pain and trauma of violence and fear which prevails in the Holy Land. Be with those who need you in these days of suffering. We pray for people of all faiths – Jews, Muslims and Christians and for all people of the land. While we pray to you, O Lord, for an end to violence and the establishment of peace, we also call for you to bring justice and equity to the peoples. Guide us into your kingdom where all people are treated with dignity and honour as your children, for, to all of us, you are our Heavenly Father.**

**Lord, in your mercy: hear our prayer.**

Father God, we also pray for all families whose homes are disrupted by anger and bitterness and where relationships are breaking up.  We thank you for the gift of your Son, our Saviour, who walks with us on our life’s journey and, as he gladdened the hearts of his friends when they saw him raised from the dead, may he travel alongside all who are struggling with their family life.

**Lord, in your mercy: hear our prayer.**

Loving God, comfort the sick and suffering with your living presence.  Heal and strengthen weak bodies, calm confused minds and reassure the lonely with your company, - as we name them in our hearts so let them feel your love in their lives.

Merciful God, we remember before you those who have died in the hope of the resurrection.  Unite us with them in your undying love.  Help us to always remember that death could not hold your Son Jesus Christ and that new life for him means new life for all who believe in Him.

**Lord, in your mercy**: **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, your Son Jesus Christ stands among us, and we have seen the marks of your saving love. Breathe on us with the power of your Holy Spirit and send us out to share the peace of Christ with all who may cross our paths in the weeks ahead.

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

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**