

After another week in this strange new world, we meet again for worship. We are still in the season of Easter, during which the Church gives full vent to the Easter message - new life where before there was only death. In most years this season coincides with the emergence of spring - when new life is all around. This year, although the signs of spring are, thanks to reduced pollution levels and increased quietness, more prominent than ever, the coronavirus crisis speaks all round the world of anything *but* new life.

Still, we worship; whatever emerges after this is all over - however profound the shock to our economy, social fabric and overall welfare - the world will need people who will rise to the challenge of rebuilding communities, livelihoods, institutions and relationships - such people will need to look beyond the present not to some imagined, rose-tinted future, but to another world altogether - God's world, indeed, and work to *realise* it (make it real) in the here and now - and whatever else such people do, they will need to worship, not what can be seen, but what cannot be seen - please God we who worship God in Christ will be amongst them.

'This joyful Eastertide'

Call to Worship

This joyful Eastertide - amid much that is far from joyful; not for a moment ignoring or dismissing the sufferings of the world, still we speak of, and believe in, this joyful season; in new life; in new hope; in a new and endless peace and wholeness - signed and promised for us and all the world in the Jesus who was dead and now is alive for evermore - and in His name and in the power of the Holy Spirit, we worship

'Up from the grave he arose'

Opening Prayer

Another week passes and Lord, we turn to you once more - and we proclaim with our hearts and spirits in *this* time, Maker of all, Lord of the universe, bringer of salvation, keeper of our lives and the world. We proclaim and praise; for you have made and you sustain. We worship and rejoice, for you have acted to save. We give grateful thanks, for you love and lift our lives; and in the light of the dying, rising Christ, our dread falls away; our fears fade; our closed minds and hearts open up to your life and love

And in this week, on this day, despite all that makes for death and dying round us in your world; we hold on to this truth - all times - all days - all moments - are in your hands - and if there is a time for everything then there is *this* time, for praise and proclamation in the face of all that ends; for worship and rejoicing in the face of all that fades away; for grateful thanks, in the face of all that takes and refuses to let go -

This time; it is a hard time for many - for us all - it is a time for change, for letting go, for an ending to things, but it is also God's time - for God's unchanging love, for God's holding on to us, for God's new beginning, in our live and in the world - a time for the rising, living, returning Christ - and in his name, we pray -

'How deep the Saviour's love for us'

Lord's Prayer:

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 forever. Amen

Godly Play: Knowing Jesus in a new way - Known in the breaking of the bread

The Grace:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.

Readings

Luke 24:13-35

Deuteronomy 18:15-18

Address

One of the lovely, gentle stories of Easter - the risen Jesus meets two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus; they are at first sad and confused - they are 'kept from recognising him'; but their hearts 'burn within them' as Jesus explains the Scriptures; they offer hospitality; Jesus shares a simple meal and 'when he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them'. Then the wonderful words that have inspired the Church ever since, 'they described how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread' -

in a few minutes we shall do much the same thing - and in this season of Easter, all this time later, we shall affirm much the same thing, 'that he is known to *us* in the breaking of the bread' -

It's typical of the stories of the Jesus of Easter - he comes and goes at will. He is both the Jesus of Nazareth and something more - one of us, but no longer bound by the physical restrictions of human life. Their eyes were kept from recognising him - meaning that *God himself* kept Cleopas and the other disciple (whoever he was) from recognising him -

Let's take that idea for today..God kept the disciples from recognising the risen Jesus. Let's take the idea, that in *our* world, God has hidden the risen Jesus, kept him from being recognised. How strange that sounds, when the whole thrust of the Faith has been to make him known to as many as possible -

Where would we be without that primary purpose of the faith? Where would missionaries be? Where would ministers be? Where would any of us be, if we didn't make for Tyndale each Sunday (except recently), if we didn't make coffee shops happen, or open the doors in welcome (Oh, how good it will be to get back to doing that again); where would Gladys Aylward, Mother Theresa, St Francis of Assisi, Benedict, Columba, thousands of others - where would the history of the world...be?

If not for '*this is my story, this is my song - praising my Saviour all the day long*'; if not for '*go forth and tell, O church of God awake*'; if not for '*Shine, Jesus shine, fill this land with the Father's glory*'.

But what about the idea - 'God has hidden the risen Jesus'? In our world, it's not so strange if you think about it. Everywhere we look there is suffering, sadness, confusion, on a scale not seen before; much of the world as we have known it is fading away - meanwhile other forms of suffering persist - other diseases, conflicts, natural disasters.

In such a world, God is hidden, for many. Prayers don't rise; religion sounds increasingly shaky, hopes are expressed in earthly things - 'back to normal'; 'can't go on like this'; 'working to reach the target' - or else placed in a Colonel Tom Moore or the increasingly stressed 'front line workers' in the NHS or the care sector - and God is nowhere to be seen

Because he has hidden himself? Surely not; surely that's too cruel for words; surely God whose love we proclaim would want to rush to save us, to reveal himself?

But we know, in the story, the disciples were kept from recognising Jesus for a time, for a purpose. In their sadness and confusion and failed hopes, *he was alongside them*; that's one of the things that makes it so lovely, for me - at no point were they left in their distress; at every point Jesus was with them - no need to spell it out in our world, surely? God may have hidden himself, but God is still here - as the desert Fathers used to say, as they kept their lonely, remote, isolated, lockdown vigils *for years..*, 'God is not elsewhere'

God *is* here, we believe, even if He is hidden - for a time? For a purpose? The purpose in the story is clear enough. As Jesus reveals how the Scriptures that everyone thought were about restoring Israel to its former glory were really about *him*, and as Jesus breaks bread and their eyes were opened.

See God's hiddenness has a purpose - always has - to make sure that when He *is* seen, it will be not as *we* would want him to be, magically solving our problems and undermining faith, swooping down and destroying enemies- did you see, by the way, the White House shop has started to sell commemorative coins, with the inscription 'World vs Virus... Together We Fought the Unseen Enemy' - it's unofficial, but still..

Not as *we* would want God to be, but as *God* would want..the Jesus who lives to be...seen, believed, encountered,,trusted....loved....known..in broken bread

Not in magic and miracles, apparitions, mighty power..broken bread

And what did the disciples say after? 'Were not our hearts burning within us?' - I reckon the hearts of many today are burning within them, with the preciousness of life, with the acute pain of loss, with the sweet seeds of eternity - it's what

makes us human, what makes us hope, and dream and love despite everything; it's the power behind the universe coursing through our veins, stronger than any virus, than any immune response..

Emmaus Enquiry

Were not our hearts burning within us?
Did we not feel, deep in our spirits, something move?
Could we not sense that here and around us
A World had changed, come fresh into focus:
Every iron law overwhelmed with love?

Have we not known, ever since Friday,
All that despaired, all that was broken, all that died,
Raged against ending, railed against silence;
A World destined for a peaceable kingdom
Would not be destroyed, though its people cried?

Could we not hope, all through the twilight
Of the gods, as all our religion came to loss,
There might yet gather, out of the stars' light,
electrons and protons and particles
Drawn by the god-blood that flowed from the Cross?

Dared we not speak, as we walked home in silence,
Words to ring life from the ravenous home of the dead?
What great reverse, what beautiful violence
Done to our doubts and the terrorist threat
Of our fear could be known only in the breaking of bread?

Burning within us, burning within us;
Earthquakes, viruses, rebellions of pain in the world.
Were not our hearts that have bled like sinners'
Hearts healed? Were not massacred spirits
Mended by bread and the Light of the World?

'Jesus is Lord, the cry that echoes though creation'

As suffering continues and losses mount, extraordinary acts of generosity and bravery abound - and governments everywhere seek to rise to the welfare and economic challenges facing their populations. Offering in Christian worship is symbolic of the spirit that must drive all our responses, large and small - the spirit of giving – it is the very spirit of God

Offering

And though we cannot be together, and though touch is everywhere denied and distance between people must be kept, still we testify to the closeness and wholeness of 'He who is our peace'

The Peace

Communion

Invitation

The table of the Lord is spread. Here we see in broken bread and poured out wine symbols of body and blood, signs of the Kingdom and emblems of salvation. There is no calculation here; no risk assessment; no measurable outcome – this is freedom, this is love extravagant as death, this is life. And here is issued a call; not to the worthy, the saintly, the well-trained, the in-crowd, but to the sinful, the weak, the poor-in-spirit, the ones who know themselves to be in need of God's constant help and forgiveness and grace – To any, who are prepared to hear the call to come, and eat and drink, and live.

Confession

How shall I repay the lord for all his benefits to me? I will take the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. O Lord our God, before your grace we may do no more than receive, and in that hope we make our confession. We confess a Christian faith marked mostly by faith in the familiar, and a refusal to look for what is truly of You in a world that is changing with every passing day. We confess lives lived for their own comfort, often heedless of the claims of others to a share in the good things we enjoy. Father forgive us (pause in quiet) and help us to receive what in Christ you freely offer, seen here in bread and wine – costly grace and suffering love and life everlasting.

Institution

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you; the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and said, take, eat, this is my body which is for you, do this in remembrance of me. IN the same way after supper he took the cup saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this whenever you drink it in memory of me – for whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Thanksgiving

Lift up your hearts,

we lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is not only right, it is our duty and our joy at all times and in all places to give you thanks and praise, Holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Jesus Christ, your only Son, our Lord..

Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying

**Holy Holy Holy, 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!**

God our Father, pour out the Holy Spirit on all your people, that we may have faith, and upon these gifts of bread and wine and this eating and drinking, that this may be for us the mystery of the body and blood of our risen Lord – so that we may receive Christ to ourselves once again, for the strengthening of our faith, the assuring of our hope, and the deepening of our love.

Responses

- Leader** Here is bread
- All** **Broken for the world's brokenness**
- Leader** Here is wine
- All** **Poured out for the world's suffering**
- Leader** How shall we eat?
- All** **In the season of Easter we come with burning hearts,**
- Leader** To know that Christ is risen
- All** **In the breaking of the bread**
- Leader** How shall we drink?
- All** **In the season of Easter we come with thirsty spirits,**
- Leader** To know that Christ is risen
- All** **In the drinking of the new wine.**
- Leader** The risen Christ is here for healing and wholeness
- All** **We take him to ourselves with grateful hearts.**

Bread & Wine

'Broken for me, broken for you'

Prayer after communion

Strengthen for service, Lord, the hands that have touched holy things:

Our ears have heard your word – now make us deaf to negative sounds and ready to listen for every voice that speaks of joy and healing and belonging in the world

Our tongues have sung your praise. Now make them free from deceit, and ready to speak only the truth in love

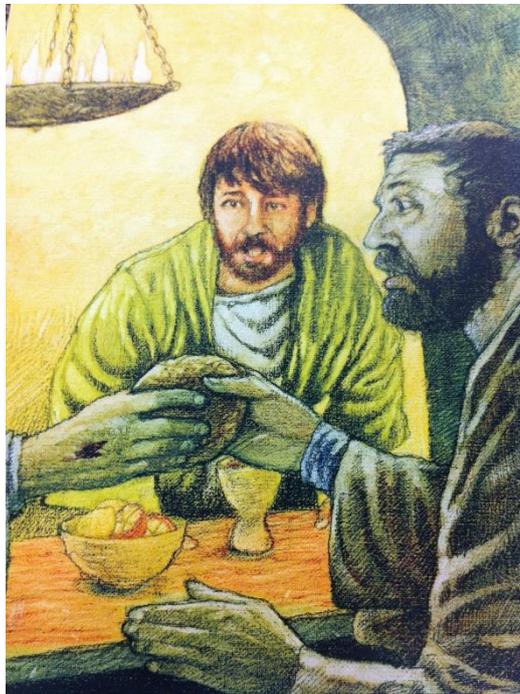
Our eyes have witnessed the drama of salvation in broken bread and poured out wine. Now make them shine with hope and look for signs of your Kingdom

Our bodies have been fed with your body. Now refresh them by your Spirit and make us ready to work for your Kingdom in the world.

Our hearts have burned within us as we have known the risen Christ in the breaking of the bread - now send us to burn with love and serve the world. Amen

'Because he lives I can face tomorrow'

Blessing



Knowing Jesus in a New Way – Known in the breaking of Bread

On this Sunday in the season of Easter we remember how in the afternoon of the first Easter, two of Jesus followers made their way slowly toward Emmaus, some seven miles from Jerusalem.

They must have been shaking their heads in wonder as they walked and talked of what had happened. The cross...The empty tomb...What did it mean?

A stranger joined them. They didn't really pay much attention until he asked, "What are you talking about?"

"Are you the only one in Jerusalem who has not heard what has taken place these last three days?"

"What happened?"

"The cross...The empty tomb. There has been so much!"

"You are foolish and slow of heart. Listen." He opened the scriptures to them. "Do you remember how we were trapped in Egypt and Moses led us out through the water into freedom? Do you remember how we were trapped in our freedom in the desert and God gave Moses the Ten Commandments to guide us? Do you remember how we were trapped in exile and the prophets said a little child would lead us and that someone would come to suffer and die so we might be really alive?"

By this time they were in the village of Emmaus. The miles had passed quickly as the stranger talked. He was about to go on when the two asked him to stay and he did.

When they sat at supper in the Inn, the stranger took a piece of bread. He gave thanks to God for it and broke it. He then shared it with the two. That was when they knew who he was, but in that moment he was gone. They sat at the table for a time talking. Now they knew why their hearts had burned within them as they walked with him on the road. They got up slowly and then hurried back to Jerusalem to tell the rest that he had been made known to them in the breaking of bread.

I wonder who you have to talk to?

I wonder what you might want to say?

I wonder who is walking beside you through these days?

I wonder what you would like to tell to others?