

St Swithun's Church Family

Third Sunday of Easter

Sunday 26th April 2020

Walking together in FAITH



Faith, hope and love

*Please use this booklet to **worship with us** – ideally at 10am on Sunday so that we know we are joining our prayers together but any time is good. Use a candle and a cross if you can find them and today have some bread ready to give your worship a focus.*

The children might like to use the Sunday school resources and audio provided by Izzy.

This is a Service of The Word. It doesn't matter if you are one person or a family together – use the booklet and go through the words – stop and reflect as you need to. Leon and Mother Ann are recording this service and it will be added to the website www.saintswithuns.org.uk

There are various prayer resources and other things to look at on the website – if you have any feedback or anything to share please let me know.

Giving - if you usually give your collection on a Sunday morning in cash, and you are able to, please put this aside each week to bring to church when you are next able to. Even better would be to set up your giving online ('Saint Swithun's PCC' ; 60-05-11 ; 16126718 ; NatWest Bank) if you haven't already done this.

You might like to enhance your worship by singing or listening to a hymn or a song at various points – I have a few suggestions below – you tube is a great resource...

Bind us together Lord <https://youtu.be/cESUZkIiKE>

What a friend we have in Jesus

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05v9hxn/player>

All my hope on God is founded

<https://youtu.be/W3LCGh02Vew>

Blessed assurance <https://youtu.be/r-S4tMucJ8g>

'Gloria' Vivaldi <https://youtu.be/XvAjgf8HE-4>

Introduction

Today is the second Sunday after Easter and we reflect together on another resurrection appearance of Jesus. Today we focus on the story of Jesus joining two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus. At first they don't recognise Jesus but as they break bread together their eyes are opened.

To help focus our worship today have with you some bread, any sort of bread, whatever you are planning to eat over the next few meals. It could be a loaf, a roll, sliced in a packet, or whatever. It could be carefully baked for an elaborate Sunday lunch, or supermarket bread that you expect to eat with jam for breakfast on Monday.

The Gathering

The Greeting

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Prayers of preparation

You take us seriously

You listen to our questions

You walk alongside us

You share our journeys

You surprise us and bless us

You fill us with wonder

You call us together

You call us to life

Open our eyes to see you amongst us

Burn in our hearts and fill us with joy

Open our minds to the truth of your story

Dance with us in the movement of life.

Saying sorry - prayers of penitence

Let us open our lives to God and ask for forgiveness and grace.

For those times when we are disappointed and worn down
and we struggle to be kind.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

For those times when we doubt what we believe
and we become cynical and complacent.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

For those times when our eyes are not opened to the vastness of
your love and we limit our vision.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

We are forgiven

May the God of love and power
forgive us and free us from our sins,
heal and strengthen us by the Spirit,
and raise us to new life in the risen Christ.

Amen.

Glory to God

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to all people on earth.

Find a way to rejoice knowing that God loves us and makes us whole. Maybe you could have a quick dance to your favourite tune, tell a funny joke, shut your eyes and feel God's loving embrace warming you, picture a place where you feel one with God.

Today, we will join in with Vivaldi's Gloria

The Collect

Risen Christ,
you filled your disciples with boldness and fresh hope:
strengthen us to proclaim your risen life
and fill us with your peace,
to the glory of God the Father.

Amen

The Liturgy of the Word

The Gospel Reading *Luke 24: 13-35*

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke
Glory to you, O Lord.

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but

they did not see him.' Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.



Sermon Leon Clarke

As everyone is saying, these are very strange times. One of the more minor quirks of these times, for some of us, is that daily exercise seems to have taken a greater degree of importance, as it is one of the few things we're allowed to do.

Is anyone going for walks for their daily exercise?

What would anyone think of walking from somewhere near St Swithuns to Bromley and back?

Maybe that is a bit more exercise than we're supposed to be taking. I mention that

because to Bromley and back is roughly the distance from Jerusalem to Emmaus, the journey walked by the 2 disciples in our reading.



Of course, walking was a quite different activity then to what it is now, in that if we encountered someone else walking in the same direction, we'd probably cross the road, and go at a slightly different speed. We'd maintain our social distancing. But then, as was the case on long distance walks and pilgrimages a couple of months ago, walking was a social activity. So the disciples walked along with whoever they met, and shared stories and ideas.

And what a sharing it was. Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus explained how it was necessary that the Messiah should suffer and enter into glory. Imagine walking all the way to Bromley and back with some great preacher who slowly explained what he thought the whole of the Old Testament was about.

Imagine walking to Bromley and back with Jesus.

Part of me thinks that this is one of the most inexplicable decisions by the gospel writers about what's interesting and worth

including, and what should be left out. Couldn't we have been given at least some short summary of this great talk? It sounds like it would clear up a few things that Christians are endlessly arguing about.

One reason for not including it is that, by some measures, it was the least successful sermon ever. Jesus spent the whole of this walk explaining to 2 of his disciples what the entire purpose of his ministry was, and they didn't even notice it was him! When they did notice, it wasn't because of some eloquent argument, but in the sharing of a meal, the breaking of bread. Could it be that's the point of this story. We shouldn't be looking for those clever eloquent arguments (a lesson I probably need to learn) what matters is sharing, breaking bread together, meeting with each other and with God.

If that's the case, it might seem like a hard lesson for the moment, when we are being kept apart. Maybe it's a lesson for us to remember when we're allowed to meet up again. Although maybe we should note any new connections that are forming during this strange time, and we should note them and try harder to keep them going when normality returns. I'm doing a better job of keeping in touch with my brother, who lives in Prague, than I ever usually do, and in my work, which involves giving technical support to programmers in banks and other companies round the world, it now seems far more common to do chats with video, and to talk about our personal situations before getting into the technical reasons for the call. Obviously other connections are being weakened; for example whether you're reading this or listening to it, I feel far less connected to you than I would if I was standing at the lectern in church.

I'd like to reflect on something else where we're missing out on a great deal, but that might enable us to experience something else more deeply. When we hear this passage, the words 'he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread', we immediately think of the communion service, which of course we're all now missing.

But while we are missing it, remember that the meal at Emmaus wasn't any sort of special service or ceremony. It was an ordinary meal, probably in the house of whoever the disciples were staying with.

While we miss the communion service, remember that it should point us out to the ordinary meals of the world. I asked you to have some bread to reflect on, and I suggested that it be bread that you were planning to use for some meal coming up soon. I now invite you to reflect on the bread, and on the situation in which you're planning to eat it. When you have that meal, be it a complex Sunday lunch or jam on toast for breakfast, remember the link between the communion service and ordinary meals. And remember it again when we're finally back together in church.



Bread seems to have been quite a complex business recently.

Bread flour is one of the ingredients that's still not reliably available. It seems loads of us have got into home baking at this time. Maybe some of us are more deeply connected to their bread now they're kneading it with their own hands rather than buying it from the shop.

On one of the local Facebook groups, someone was encouraging people to get into making sourdough bread. He posted videos of how to make it, and left loads of little pots of sourdough starter outside his house. Then there was a flurry of posts of people sharing their successes baking delicious looking sourdough bread. This was happening at a time when all the shops I usually visited never seemed to have any bread flour, and I was getting worried I'd have to stop home baking!



I've found this year the strangest Easter I've ever known, stranger than years when the Easter joy was utterly hidden by mourning, because I do firmly believe that connecting with others is absolutely the core of the Christian life. Connecting with the church community, connecting with wider neighbours, even connecting with our enemies.

I don't think that we should be pretending that our Christian life is going on as normal despite everything. It's not. We're even disconnected in that for different people, life in lockdown is very different with different challenges. Some people are doing fine financially but are stuck at home with nothing to do. Some are much busier, still working but also having to educate children. Some are under massive financial pressure. Some people are stuck in unsatisfactory homes, or with people they don't want to be with. In our gospel we heard a story that for most of time would seem unremarkable; 2 travellers met a third, talked together then shared a meal, but we are in strange times where talking to those we meet, and sharing hospitality, are gone. We heard the famous words, 'he was made known to them in the breaking of bread', but even on Easter day we didn't meet to break bread. In these times, we must cling onto the expressions of community and connection that we still have, and note what we're missing ready to embrace these things more fully when they're allowed to return.

Amen

Profession of Faith

We remember that Jesus joins us on our journey of faith – and that we are all walking together as a church family despite our physical distance:

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.
We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.
We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.
We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Prayers

As we pray together today we focus on the Emmaus story and pray for ourselves, each other and the world today.

On the road to Emmaus, two followers of Jesus were talking about what had happened to him. In their darkness, they did not yet know that he was risen.

Dying Jesus, whose final human pain was a sense of abandonment by God, look mercifully on us and our world as we endure the difficulties of coronavirus, especially we remember those feeling traumatised by social distancing, those who are grieving and lost, those who feel harmed by fear death, those whose livelihoods are broken. May we enter into your transformation of our world, remembering your love is stronger than death.

Thy kingdom come
Thy will be done

As the two followers talked, Jesus drew near, but they did not see that he was the Risen Christ.

God of light, enter into the dark places of our lives and fill them with what you want us to see. Take our blindness and give us new vision for the way ahead; take our fear and give us fresh courage for the path that leads ahead. Help us to envision a world of love and kindness and as a church family to shine that light in our homes, our communities, our work – may we live as an Easter people.

Thy kingdom come

Thy will be done

In answer to Jesus' questions, the followers told their story, and their eyes were opened.

All seeing and unseen God, you make your presence known to us when we least expect it. Come to us, we pray, when our need is greatest. Give us peace, in these troubled times. As we are locked inside our homes, and with our movements restricted, we pray that we will find release from the impact of feeling trapped. We pray for those in our community who are suffering from depression and anxiety, those who are coping with abusive homes, those who feel uncomfortable in their homes. As we share our stories may we feel the power of the resurrection transforming our lives.

Thy kingdom come

Thy will be done

As they neared the end of their journey, the two followers invited Jesus to supper. Only then did they realise who he was.

God of darkness and light we see you not as you are but as we are. Take these clouded lenses from our eyes. Unprotected from your brightness, may we see you all around us and in the struggle of our lives. We pray especially for those whose struggles feel overwhelming – especially we pray for John, Sydney, Edith, Vanda, Lorna, Sean, Ena, Stephen, Evelyn, Alfrina and Karen, Maureen, Paulette, Adrian, Lemar and families. Surround them with your loving presence.

Thy kingdom come
Thy will be done

At the end of the journey, the two followers knew resurrection joy.
We remember those who journeyed with us and have moved on
into your eternal presence where their eyes are fully opened to
your love and glory. We thank you for your presence with us now
and always. We especially remember Blanche, Vivian and Avril

Rest eternal grant unto them O Lord
And let light perpetual shine upon them

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

The Prayer Jesus taught us

*Today we have remembered that Jesus broke bread at an
ordinary meal – in the prayer which Jesus taught us we ask for
'our daily bread'. The ordinary is a place to encounter Jesus.
It is also 'ours' not just 'mine'.*

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

**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 this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

The Peace

Breaking bread together is a Jewish symbol of hospitality and peace and was traditionally done before every meal – a bit like saying grace. In our story today we remember that the two disciples recognised Jesus when he broke bread at an ordinary meal – a time of offering peace – how can you share the peace of Christ today?

The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and said 'Peace be with you.'

Then were they glad when they saw the Lord. Alleluia.

The Peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

We have reflected today that we are missing our usual church services and time to be together physically - however Leon reminded us that we can still cling onto the expressions of community and connection that we have. Perhaps you could give someone a ring or message them to share God's peace today?



Dismissal and Blessing

The Blessing

May the power of the Creator who brings life out of death,
give us strength in our lives wherever we are.

May the risen Christ be our constant companion
in this time of separation.

May the healing embrace of the Holy Spirit encircle us
so that we can see resurrection in our gloom.

and may the blessing of God
Creator, Redeemer and Spirit
be with us and those we love
now and always

Amen.

The Dismissal

We are raised to new life with Christ.

Go in his peace.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Thanks be to God.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Notices:

- In the absence of foodbank collections Olivia invites us to donate online <https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-involved/ways-to-give/make-a-one-off-donation/>
- If you know of anyone in any need – please let Mother Juliet know as we are working with others who can help.
- Stay safe – and keep others safe.

Birthdays:

- To everyone who has a birthday at this time – Happy Birthday!

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