

18th APRIL 2021 - Service prepared by Helen

Hello little flock,

Praise God for sunshine! Wow, it has such an effect on my mood. I feel as though something deep inside me comes alive when the sun shines. I hope you find time to enjoy the small things this coming week as they so often turn out to be the big things. Keep investing in self-care this week as well, as the advert goes: You're worth it.

Sit quietly for a moment and acknowledge the love God has for you, even when you've failed to love yourself. That love is all around you, let it in to touch the hidden wounds inside. We are family today, united though apart. If there are worries that are on your mind today offload them now, acknowledge them and then be prepared to move on.

StF 408

How small a spark has lit a living fire!
How small a flame has lit a bitter world!
How great a heart was moved to hope, to dare
and bring the faith out in the open air!

No boundary sign will stand against this faith,
no wall restrain this preaching of the Word:
the Good News travels on, it rides the road
and draws to unity the realm of God.

The single note becomes a psalm of praise,
the single voice grows to a swelling choir
and born in song, new stories now are sung
of freedom, chains unbound and loosened tongue.

Thank God for all who listened and believed,
who still are by the Spirit set on fire -
our hearts be warmed again, for Christ will wait
on beach, in upper room, or Aldersgate.

Shirley Erena Murray

LUKE 24:36b-48

Then the two from Emmaus told their story of how Jesus had appeared to them as they were walking along the road, and how they had recognised him as he was breaking the bread. And just as they were telling about it, Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them. "Peace be with you," he said. But the whole group was startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost!

"Why are you frightened?" he asked. "Why are your hearts filled with doubt? Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it's really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don't have bodies, as you see that I do." As he spoke, he showed them his hands and hid feet.

Still they stood there in disbelief, filled with joy and wonder. Then he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he ate it as they watched.

Then he said, "When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. And he said, "Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: 'There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.' You are witnesses of all these things.

"And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven."

REFLECTION

Don't just stand there looking gormless. Let's put the kettle on. By the way, are your passports up to date? - Gospel according to Helen.

Well, Easter Sunday has been and gone and yet the resurrection of Jesus and the birthing of the church continues. What is happening before their very eyes is extraordinary and the disciples and other followers are having a job to take it all in. They got involved by following Jesus around the dusty lanes of Palestine, listening to his stories, marvelling at his insight and authority and the revolutionary teachings he gave. They had seen even 'sinners' and Gentiles being drawn into the picture but even so, this was mind blowing. Let's be honest, in all the funerals I have taken not one person has come back to life. It's fine talking about the theory of such an event but nothing prepares you for the reality. All those years studying the scriptures but suddenly they were in uncharted territory, there was no precedent for any of this. I'm sure the disciples were pinching themselves at this point. A small powerless group of Galilean peasants were now charged with spreading the gospel to the ends of the known world. And that world was a mess. It was filled then, as it is now, with 'us and them'. The people who are like us and the people who aren't. They are even called to the very people who just days earlier were responsible for Jesus' execution.

In this passage Jesus confronts their fears and doubts but does so in a kindly way. Jesus often used meals as a way to break down barriers, even resurrection Jesus. I'm sure if he came to my house to try and sort me out he'd be asking me to stick the kettle on. He avoids the confrontational approach which puts people on the defensive, offering them no way out. It didn't work then and it doesn't work now.

The news has been filled with divisions, old wounds in Northern Ireland are being opened up, children egged on to violence. The inappropriate lobbying of a former prime minister has exposed the old boys network still thriving in the 21st century. Such actions may well make us angry but we do well to remember that our aim is reconciliation and that involves calling out mistakes and pray for a way forward where such a person can use their wealth and privilege for the greater good rather than self-advancement.

Our nation is talking about having more nuclear weapons, weapons that could obliterate thousands and poison the very planet. I struggle to see how this attitude can be aligned with gospel values. I have to work on my prejudices too.

As we as a nation mourned the passing of the Duke of Edinburgh the royal family seems to be divided into two camps. Royalty has been the last bastion of tradition but surely there is room for William's traditional approach as well as Harry's more modern one without this split becoming irrevocable. Bereavement is an opportunity to heal wounds and divisions and put everything into perspective.

Over and over again we find the Kingdom of God thrives on healthy relationships. Are there any relationships you need to work on? Could this be your moment to be the bigger person? Nationally, what errors need to be called out today? How can we manifest our desire for healing? Jesus, as he does so often, used meals as a tool to develop relationships, often with people who were hitherto excluded or who held opposing views.

StF 402

Go to the world! Go into all the earth.
Go preach the cross where Christ renews life's worth
baptising as the sign of our rebirth.
Alleluia!

Go to the world! Go into every place.
Go live the word of God's redeeming grace.
Go seek God's presence in each time and space.
Alleluia!

Go to the world! Go struggle, bless, and pray;
the nights of tears give way to joyous day.
As servant Church you follow Christ's own way.
Alleluia!

Go to the world! Go as the ones I send,
for I am with you till the age shall end,
and when the hosts of glory cry, 'Amen!'
Alleluia!

Sylvia G. Dunstan

INTERCESSIONS

Loving Father,

Thank you for accepting us as we are, despite our failings. You never let our past define us nor do you seek our humiliation. But you do require our active and positive participation in what you are doing. To that end we lay at your feet all our abilities and talents and pray we may be alert to ways that we can use them in your service.

We pray for nations divided, for areas of conflict where there is war and oppression, where barriers are erected geographically and psychologically. We pray for those held captive because of their views. We pray for those who work to heal and reunite people of differing views, for peacemakers and diplomats.

We pray for anyone who is working to understand another viewpoint or perspective. For those who are reaching out the hand of friendship across the divide.

We pray for churches divided, for those who find it hard to coexist. We pray for resentments and hurts that fester, and for issues swept under the carpet and not dealt with. We think of the many people who stopped being part of the institutional church because of some dispute or disagreement. We bring to you those who came but felt unwelcome, for those who feel rejected and unloved.

Father, looking back we can see how much we have in common with those earliest followers of Jesus, give us courage and self-awareness to be channels of your grace. Remove from us anything that might stop your Spirit flowing through us.

We ask these things in Jesus' name and to your glory.

AMEN

Go as witnesses to all these things into your neighbourhoods and the world and do so in the power of the resurrection and the might of the risen Lord.

AMEN