

EASTER 3 SERVICE (26TH April 2020)

May the peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also, with you.

Music: 380 (TiS)

1. Yours be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory over death you've won;
angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
kept the folded graveclothes, where your body lay.

*Yours be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory over death you've won.*

See, Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb;
lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and gloom;
let the church with gladness hymns of triumph sing,
for the Lord is living, death has lost its sting.

Refrain

No more we doubt you, glorious Prince of life;
life is naught without you: aid us in our strife;
make us more than conquerors through your deathless love;
bring us safe through Jordan to your home above.

Refrain

I pay my respect to the traditional custodians of this land in which we live, work, play and worship. To their elders and members past, present and emerging.

Welcome to you all. Those who are able to join this broadcast and those who are joining us via hard copies being distributed and through emails, postage, and social media.

Let us join together in this prayer of Thanksgiving and Confession:

O crucified and risen Lord; we celebrate your victory over death. We believe that you have ransomed us from our futility – our salvation was given unmerited and undeserved. In Christ's resurrection we are born anew with Him and in Him to a new hope and life everlasting.

Forgive us when we're afraid to take a truthful look at ourselves and open our eyes when we won't listen to you. Open our ears and our hearts to hear your voice and follow. Open our mouths to proclaim your peace and your love.

Amen!

Declaration of Forgiveness:

The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ has come and will continue to come to remind us that our salvation has been won. Because you hold this faith, I now declare to you all that our sins are forgiven.

Doxology: 771 (TiS)

*Now to him who loved us, gave us
every pledge that love could give,
freely shed his blood to save us,
gave his life that we might live.
Be the kingdom and dominion
and the glory evermore. (Samuel Miller Waring 1792-1827 alt)*

Reading: Luke 24: 13-35 (NRSV)

Message: Emmaus 'The walk of the disappointed'

It takes two hours to walk seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus, 11.26 kilometres. Two men who were in Jerusalem when Jesus was crucified were walking that road to Emmaus. On that road they were talking about all that had happened. They were sad and disappointed. The crucifixion is solid truth, for there was a trial and a public execution. A nameplate was placed above his head and he died before the eyes of a hundred witnesses. His death was real.

His resurrection? Well...there is a rumour of an empty tomb probably because the body was stolen or maybe he was revived and walked away. After all, it was women who first spread the story. And those who said they saw him in the flesh is having a pretty hard time trying to convince everyone else.

Thomas couldn't believe it, not until he had seen for himself and six post resurrection appearances does not go very far until now.

That was the subject of the two who were travelling toward Emmaus. But it all sounds too familiar. Because that is where we find ourselves as a church and as individuals on this post resurrection Sunday. Because none of us was there, for the real death and the rumoured resurrection.

But what if it is true? Wouldn't you want to meet him, I mean, wouldn't you want an encounter with the risen Jesus? A meeting with the living God?

Oh, yes please...but where do I find Him?

Luke is telling us, yes... on the road between here and Emmaus.

Although Luke is the only gospel writer who tells us this story of the walk to Emmaus and what happened on that road, most of us have walked it one time or another. We have walked it when we look at the devastation of the corona virus, we have walked it when our dreams are dashed, we have walked it when hopes disappeared and bitterness fills our hearts.

We have walked it when people die over drug overdose or people treated according to their income or the colour of their skin. Of course, we have walked it, that very familiar road of disappointment.

The two disciples were talking about it. The trial, the crucifixion, the silent procession to the tomb. Then the women's vision of the empty grave and angels and it seems that Jesus' death is no problem. It is the rumoured resurrection, for them and for many of us on our own Emmaus road.

It was during this walk and talk of disappointments that a stranger comes up behind them and asked them what they were talking about. I can imagine further disappointment from the two disciples as they stop dead in their track and said to the stranger, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does know the things that have happened?" Truth is, they were probably happy for another disappointed person to join them.

The two disciples then started to tell their newfound friend about how promising it was from the beginning. "We had hoped he was the one to redeem Israel". We had hoped! In the past tense...as Barbara Brown Taylor says, "It is one of the saddest sounds a human being can make".

We believed things might change but we were wrong. He died; it is over. No more miracles, no more eloquent teaching and preaching, no more illusions and fairy tales.

It was then that their stranger friend explodes "Oh, how foolish you are and how slow of heart". In other words, as one commentator says..."You idiots, if you had read your bibles none of this would come as a surprise to you. Christ is not the one who wins the power struggle, he is the one who loses it.

The Christ is not the undefeated champion, he is the suffering servant, the broken one who comes into his glory with wounded hands and feet, and his resurrected body bears the marks of his crucifixion.

Then the stranger opens up the scripture!

What an encounter, the resurrected Christ resurrecting their wounded crucified hope of two disappointed disciples.

When they got to the village, things turned around again for the two disciples. They hadn't heard enough from their stranger friend and they invited him to stay with them a bit longer. They offered him hospitality, their house, their food and their table. But it was the stranger

guest who becomes the host. He took the bread, says the blessing, breaks the bread and gave it to them! They took a look at him, and they looked at each other...we know him! Then he vanishes from their sight.

The blindness of the two disciples and our own blindness will not keep the resurrected Christ from coming. He came to them; he is coming to us. The encounter of the crucified and risen Lord is not and will never be limited by our own blindness.

As is often happened, we only recognise our blindness after we see. That is the recognition of the two disciples. Their eyes were opened, their faith restored.

If you invite him to your house and offer him your bread and your table, he will take it, he will bless it, he will break it, he will give it. That is his life! He will do the same with his own flesh and blood showing us what life eternal is all about.

He will take what we have been given, he will bless them, he will break them, and he will give them only if we are willing to offer it to him.

We invite him as our guest, he becomes our host scars and all. That is the life we are called to and that is the place that he will return again and again. Amen!

Prayer of Intercession:

Holy Spirit pray for us when we have few words and when our faith is limited by humanness or diminished by discouragements and unanswered questions. We so often find our lives running out in streams of effort which seem to bear little fruit.

Renew our lives Holy Spirit. Touch us with the mystery of your endless commitment so that we may stay when others leave and grant us your peace and the power to forgive.

Come and stay with us awhile, resurrected Christ and be our guest, take our bread, our lives and bless them, break us and give us out to our broken and blind world, so that we may break bread with the poor, the lonely and the disadvantaged.

Restore our faith O crucified risen Lord. Heal us when we are wounded by life's struggles and lead us on when we do not know the way.

Be with us and within us now. Amen.

Blessing: 778 (TiS)

*Shalom to you now, shalom my friends
May God's full mercies bless you, my friends.
In all your living and through your loving,
Christ be your shalom, Christ be your shalom!*