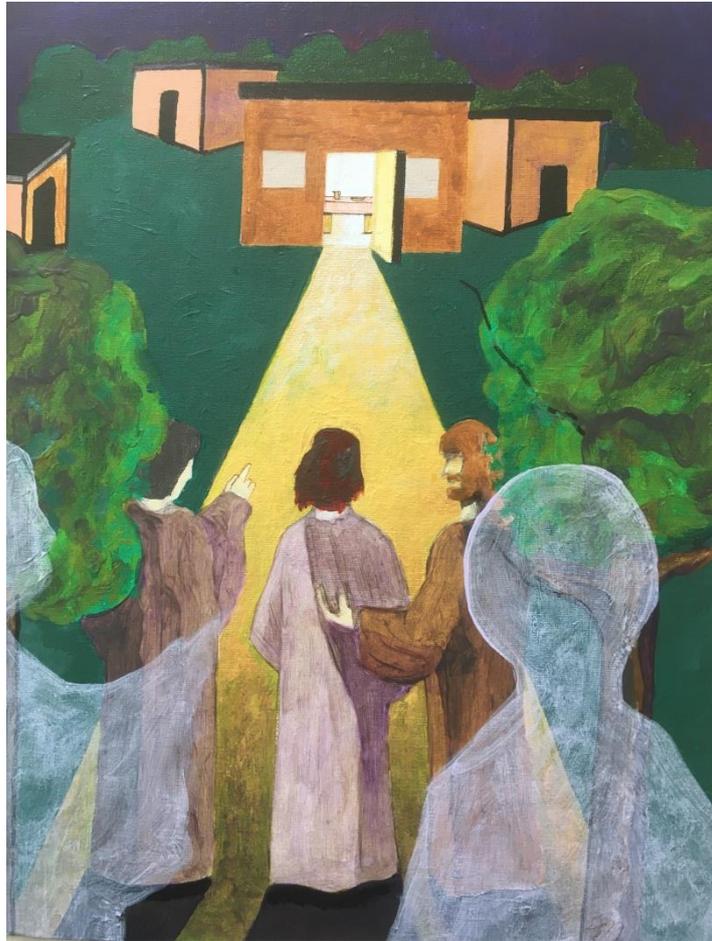


Walking & Talking with the Risen Christ

Sunday 26th April 2020
St Mary's Tadley



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.

The Gathering

The Greeting

Welcome to worship at St Mary's this morning. However you are joining, please enter in as you can and join in spirit as a family. You'll find a booklet of prayers and poems to read during these times, and I pray you draw strength from these words, some of which are favourites of our congregation.

We walk today with the disciples on the road to Emmaus and hear from our Rector Richard Harlow as well as others who have contributed to this service.

If you have a candle, please get ready to light it as we remember Christ and others with whom we share.

Silence ... as we prepare our hearts for worship.

Prayer whilst lighting a candle representing Easter Light:

May the light of Christ, rising in glory
Banish all darkness from our hearts and minds

The light of Christ

Thanks be to God

Alleluia, Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Prayers of Preparation

**Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Hymn 19: All my hope on God is founded

All my hope on God is founded,
all my trust he shall renew;
he, my guide through changing order,
only good and only true:
God unknown, he alone
calls my heart to be his own.

Pride of man and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray his trust;
all that human toil can fashion,
tower and temple, fall to dust.
But God's power, hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.

Day by day our mighty giver
grants to us his gifts of love;
in his will our souls find pleasure,
leading to our home above:
love shall stand at his hand,
joy shall wait for his command.

Still from Earth to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done;
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ his Son:
hear Christ's call, one and all –
we who follow shall not fall.

*Public Domain. Joachim Neander [1650-80]
Paraphrased by Robert Bridges [1844-1930]*

Prayers of Penitence

Like Mary at the empty tomb,
we fail to grasp the wonder of your presence.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Like the disciples behind locked doors,
we are afraid
to be seen as your followers.

Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

Like Thomas in the upper room,
we are slow to believe.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

The Absolution

May the Father of all mercies
cleanses you from your sins,
and restore you in his image
to the praise and glory of his name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

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.

The Liturgy of the Word

Reading

Acts 2.14a, 36-41 by Julie Dollin

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

2¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.

³⁶ Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.'

³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, 'Brothers, what should we do?' ³⁸ Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that

your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
³⁹ For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.' ⁴⁰ And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.' ⁴¹ So those who welcomed his message were baptised, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

A reading from the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Gospel Reading *Luke 24.13-35 by Mary Flynn*

24 ¹³Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad.

¹⁸ 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?' ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ 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. ²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us.

They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³ 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. ²⁴ 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.'

²⁵ Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' ²⁷ Then

beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

³² 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?'

³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴ They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' ³⁵ 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.

Thanks be to God.

Sermon by Revd Richard Harlow

The Road to Emmaus

I heard from a mum who is looking after 4 children at home during this lockdown: the family were sitting down for Sunday lunch, which dad had cooked. Sunday lunch is quite an event in their family, and dad had made a great spread. To cap it all, he had made a special gravy this time, with added onions and mustard. He served it out to the 4 children, who range in age from 2 to 10 yrs old. One of the boys looked at the gravy and immediately went into a paddy, a total and utter melt down.

He screamed on and off for the next 4 hours, and at one point took all his clothes off in protest. Now that is the way to protest! When I heard the story I couldn't stop myself laughing, which wasn't the most pastoral response. But what a way to protest! 4 hours wailing because the gravy looked different!

Of course, the reality is that probably only 5 minutes of the child's protest was about the gravy, the other 3 hours and 55 minutes were about missing his friends, his football, his school, the outside world and everything else that used to make life normal. But I love it that he expressed his anger,

and kept it up for the next 4 hours. Though I'm not sure his parents felt the same!

I wonder how much protesting you have done about the situation that we are in now? I wonder where all the stress, frustration and anxiety have gone? As we become adults, we tend to become much better at hiding our emotions. We repress them, instead of expressing them. It is the socially acceptable thing to do, sometimes called the stiff upper lip. And generally it is the wise thing to do. We fear or despise those who can't keep a rein on their emotions.

But it is never so simple. Emotions don't go away when we repress them, unless we learn how to channel them. Unreleased emotions wake us at night or bother us with phantom pains. We have to express them somehow.

I was reminded of the story of the little boy and the gravy by today's reading. These 2 disciples, Cleopas and another, probably his wife, are heading back home after the first Easter day. But wait a minute! Why are they going home? They have been told that Jesus is alive, that some of the women have already seen him in Jerusalem, and now they are walking away, 7 miles away. Can you believe that? The most amazing miracle is happening before their eyes, and they are going home! Why are they not staying there, hoping, praying for a glimpse of Jesus themselves?

It beggars belief. It's like those people who leave a great party at 10 o'clock, because that is bed time, or who show no interest when a new born baby is brought into church for the first time. Of course, we understand that they might just hate parties or work nights or the sight of a baby may cause them pain, but there is something strange, something disconnected, something emotion-less about their response.

Or they might be in shock. The first few days after a bereavement often cause us to lose all emotion. We simply run on auto-pilot, habitually going through the motions. Maybe Cleopas and his wife aren't party poopers, but are simply in shock.

Whatever the truth, Jesus finds them. He walks with them for long enough until their blind eyes are opened. He finds them on their weary trudge home. He enters their home. He waits for a meal to be prepared. He deliberately, slowly, painfully waits for them to realise whom they are talking to. And, by God, it takes them a long time. I reckon it takes about 3 hours to

walk 7 miles, perhaps another hour to get some food together. They walk and talk with the risen Christ for 4 hours before they finally realise who he is!

What a gracious God we have! What amazing patience, Jesus shows on this, his day of victory, the most important day in history, and Jesus spends 4 hours with 2 dim-witted, despairing, traumatised disciples. How great the love of God...O wait a minute, this is you and me, isn't it? I was 17 years old before I became a Christian. Jesus had walked with me for 17 years before I saw who he was. Since then, there have been numerous times when he has been telling me things for days, even years, before the penny dropped.

You see, we are highly defended against the unexpected. Our brains are lazy. Once they have worked something out, they are really reluctant to change their thinking. I give you an example: when Kayla and I first got married, she saw me cleaning my teeth one night. I noticed that she was laughing at me. Nothing unusual in that, but she couldn't contain her mirth, "Why on earth do you clean your teeth like that?" she asked. "I always have", I replied. "You're damaging them, you idiot." She said.

Well, of course, I took no notice of her. I mean, she's a mental health nurse, not a dentist. But eventually the penny dropped that my dentists have been saying to me for the last 20 years: "you are damaging your teeth with too much brushing". Finally Kayla bought me an electric toothbrush and I learnt a new way. But 20 years of wrong brushing! 20 years of being told every 6 months by a dentist "You are damaging your teeth". That's how reluctant we are to change our thinking. Mostly we will go on doing something, even something stupid, until the pain gets so great that we have to stop.

Or maybe it's just me. I'm sure that none of you are as fixed and foolish as me. I'm sure that as soon as your wife or boss or son says to you, "It would be much better if you did it this way", you immediately think "I'm so glad you told me that."

And we treat God the same way as we do a human who dares to correct us. Mostly we ignore Him, and when we can no longer do that, we get angry or sulky (which is the same thing). And still Jesus is patient. Their hearts burned within them, but still they didn't recognise him. Finally they did so at the breaking of bread, at the meal table, at the communion. It's one of the reasons we celebrate communion most Sundays, because our defences come

down round the table, or hearts are open to see what has always been there to see, and to hear what has always been spoken.

People think there are better ways to spend Sunday than in church. Obviously. But we know that God speaks to us there. Yes, God speaks to us everywhere, but it seems like it is there that we are really open to hear. So with our buildings closed, we are in danger of missing the words of God again.

But not necessarily so. God speaks all the time. We don't need the building. We don't even need the table. What we do need are soft hearts, and minds that are willing, wanting to change. We need to learn a new posture, not a defensive, "nobody can teach me anything" posture, but a learner, a disciple mindset. This is what we are - disciples, learners. The prayer at the beginning of our liturgy needs to become our prayer every day:

Almighty God to whom all hearts are open, all desires know, and from whom no secrets are hidden, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your Holy name, through Christ our Lord.

We pray for open hearts to that we may learn how to love God properly and how to glorify his Name in all the earth.

One day we will emerge from this period of lockdown, probably not in a moment, but over a period of weeks. Lots has been written about our hopes for a better world after coronavirus. I want to warn you that that is far from inevitable. The world after WW2 was not a better world. The world after 9/11 was not a better world. You see, our habitual minds go straight back to what they are used. We will most likely get back in our cars and go on our foreign holidays and waste money at the shops just like we did 6 months ago unless we make a decision to change and start to behave differently by choice. It is hard work to change. We have to decide the world that we want to inhabit the other side of this, and begin to live that way now. We have to embrace that world with our heart and our mind. We have to live by faith, seeing things that are yet to come.

The little boy who protested for 4 hours because the gravy was wrong needs to be us, protesting a world where the rich get richer and the poor poorer, where human life is cheaper than the plastic with which we choke our oceans, where we burn the resources that the earth took millions of years to

create just for a holiday in the sun, where God is more often a swear word than the One before whom we bow.

We need to take that energy of protest and create a better world now, in our homes, in our streets, in the queue outside Sainsbury's. The Risen Jesus walks with us. We are not alone. Together we really can change the world, as those first disciples did. We don't know what became of Cleopas and his wife, but we do know that Peter, John, Andrew and Paul turned the world around in a few years. Let it be so again.

Prayers by Andrew Thompson

Let us pray.

Lord, while the disciples on the road did not at first recognise Jesus alongside them, in this time of uncertainty and fear and separation help us recognise your risen presence in stranger or neighbour, on the road, although at a distance, or over the fence, or the phone or the internet. Help us recognise you in those supporting and helping us. We give thanks that we can see your new life in the sunshine and new growth and signs of spring around us.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Lord, help us recognise you and your risen presence in all who are caring for others, in hospitals, in care homes, in their own homes. We ask you to empower and support them in their work, and keep them all safe. We ask for strength and perseverance for all keeping hospitals running, and for all keeping food supplies and essential services going. We pray for hope for people, businesses and enterprises worried about finance, now and for the future that is uncertain.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Lord, we pray for families, children, parents, grandparents, who may be separated, or may be thrown close together. Help those who are struggling, give to all patience and perseverance, help our young people with learning and education and keeping occupied.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Lord, the spread of the virus is a reminder that this world is one, that all people, made in your image, are connected. Give wisdom to leaders and

governments and their advisers, in this country and across the world, that they may make right plans and decisions. Support all those working towards successful treatments and vaccines.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Lord, we ask your presence and comfort for the sick and suffering and fearful, in isolation, those with the Covid virus, those known to us and on our hearts

...

And we ask your peace upon all who have died, from the virus and other causes, and your support for all who are grieving at this very difficult time ...

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

As Jesus' resurrected body seemed not the same as before, not a turning back of the clock, help us all positively rethink the future of our lives and of the church when we begin to come out of isolation and separation. And above all, reassure us that nothing in all creation can separate us from your love revealed in Jesus Christ.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Amen.

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

The Peace

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.

Alleluia.

The peace of the risen Christ be always with you
and also with you.

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

...with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, singing the hymn of your unending praise.

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, 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.**

...
Great is the mystery of faith.
Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Christ is the bread of life
**When we eat this bread and drink this cup,
we proclaim your death, Lord Jesus,
until you come in glory.
Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

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.**

Breaking of the Bread

Jesus says, I am the bread of life,
whoever eats this bread will live for ever.

**Lord, our hearts hunger for you;
give us this bread always.**

**Jesus, Lamb of God,
have mercy on us.**

**Jesus, bearer of our sins,
have mercy on us.**

**Jesus, redeemer of the world,
grant us peace.**

Giving of Communion

Alleluia, Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.

Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.

Jesus is the Lamb of God
who takes away the sin of the world.

Blessed are those who are called to his supper.

**Lord, I am not worthy to receive you,
but only say the word, and I shall be healed.**

The body of Christ, broken for you.

Amen.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

Amen.

Prayer after Communion

**We thank you, Lord,
that you have fed us in this sacrament,
united us with Christ,
and given us a foretaste
of the heavenly banquet
prepared for all peoples. Amen.**

The Dismissal

The God of peace,
who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,
that great shepherd of the sheep,
make you perfect in every good work to do his will,
and the blessing of God almighty,

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

The Blessing

God the Father

by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead,
strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life;

and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be
among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

Hymn 290: Lord of the Dance

**Please refer to your own copy of the words for this hymn

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Thank you for participating in our service today. If you have any questions, comments, or would like to get in contact with Revd Gill for any reason, please phone the Vicarage on 01189 279 321.

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