



Heacham Parish Church



Sunday Service 18th April 2021 4th Easter 3

Opening music - The theme from Mendelssohn's Nocturne from 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' played by Adrian

As we gather in our homes, together yet apart, we meet in the presence of God, so let us come together to be God's people.

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you
All and also with you.

Alleluia, Christ is risen.
He is risen indeed, Alleluia.

Jesus Christ is risen from the dead.
Alleluia.

He has defeated the powers of death.
Alleluia.

Jesus turns our sorrow into dancing.
Alleluia.

He has the words of eternal life.
Alleluia.

Song: Jesus the name high over all
sung & played by Sue, Colin, Rosie, Richard C, Lesley, and Hilary

Jesus, the name high over all,
in hell, or earth, or sky;
angels and men before it fall,
and devils fear and fly.

Jesus, the name to sinners dear,
the name to sinners given;
it scatters all their guilty fear,
it turns their hell to heaven.

Jesus, the prisoner's fetters breaks,
and bruises Satan's head;
power into strengthless souls
he speaks, and life into the dead.

O that the world might taste and see
the riches of His grace!
The arms of love that compass me,
would all mankind embrace.

His only righteousness I show,
his saving truth proclaim:
'tis all my business here below
to cry: 'Behold the Lamb!'

Happy, if with my latest breath
I may but gasp His name:
Preach Him to all, and cry in death:
'Behold, behold the Lamb!'

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.**

May we know that the God of love
brings us back to himself,
forgives us our sins,
and assures us of his eternal love
in Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Bible Reading: Acts 3: 12-19 read by Sue Turner

A Reflection by Penny Sutton

For the last few weeks, our readings have come from one or other of the four gospels. Each has a slightly different perspective, but they all record the earthly life of Jesus. They relate how he was born to a Jewish family, then practised an itinerant ministry for three years which culminated in his crucifixion and resurrection. Each gospel is a proclamation, an announcement of good news. Today we move to the book of the Acts of the Apostles. In contrast to the four accounts of the life of Jesus this is the only account of the activities of the early Church. Here we begin to see what the implications of that announcement are, what that gospel proclamation entails for followers of Jesus.

The post-resurrection Jesus had told his disciples "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth". Then he left them. As promised the Holy Spirit came upon them in power at Pentecost so now they were actively witnessing all they had experienced. Our narrative tells how Peter, the probably illiterate ex-fisherman, addressed the crowd. This crowd had gathered because a man they had known for years as a crippled beggar, was on his feet and praising God. Enabled and empowered by the Holy Spirit, Peter explained the theology of the healing the crowd had just witnessed.

Unfortunately, we are separated by both culture and time from Peter's explanation, so we need to explain the explanation. Why bother, particularly if it is not relevant to our culture and time? For the Christian

Church, the principles will always be relevant, no matter where or when they are applied. Peter addressed "Men of Israel". He was primarily speaking to a Jewish audience. "We didn't make this man walk", he said, "that was Jesus whom God has glorified". The reference to the God of the Patriarchs would stir thoughts of the Exodus in Jewish minds. The time when God freed his people from slavery in Egypt. Peter is saying by implication, 'he's doing it again. God is offering you escape from the slavery of sin and the law'. He listed four ways that the Jews had dishonoured Jesus and finally contrasted this with "but God raised him from the dead and we are witnesses to this".

The interest of the crowd had been firmly redirected from both the healed beggar and the disciples to Jesus. "That man was healed by faith in the name of Jesus, once rejected but now resurrected and reigning". To dispel any doubt concerning the identity of Jesus, Peter used Messianic names and referenced fulfilment of prophecy. He ended with a challenge to repent and outlined the resultant blessings. The word used for wiping sin away is the word used for cleaning a blackboard. Once the writing has gone it is irretrievable. That sin can be replaced with the rest and relief of refreshment from God as the Christian looks forward to Christ's second coming when he will restore creation.

Peter painted a picture of the Old Testament as a single great sequence of events which constantly points forward to something God is going to do. This is the restoration of all things when everything will be put right. Now, this event is happening in Jesus. God longs to see individuals turn away from the life they have been leading and turn to Him. Anyone can know the joy of being forgiven, refreshed by the love and mercy of God; of discovering new life and purpose in following Jesus.

Peter's explanation showed God saving his people by the actions of Jesus the Messiah and all are invited to respond.

There are 3 universal principles:

1. Genuine forgiveness is possible for all.
2. Believers' activities must give all the credit to Jesus.
3. Believing in Jesus and the power of his name is the way to wholeness of body, mind, and spirit.

Amen

Song: **Spirit of holiness**

sung & played by Hilary, Lesley, Lynda, Karen, Terry, and Richard G

Spirit of holiness,
wisdom and faithfulness,
Wind of the Lord,
blowing strongly and free;
strength of our serving
and joy of our worshipping,
Spirit of God,
bring Your fulness to me!

You came to interpret
and teach us effectively
all that the Saviour
has spoken and done;
to glorify Jesus is all Your activity,
promise and gift of the Father and Son:

Spirit of holiness....

You came with Your gifts
to supply all our poverty,
pouring Your love
on the church in her need;
You came with Your fruit
for our growth to maturity,
richly refreshing the souls
that You feed:

Spirit of holiness....

Prayers of Intercession, led by Penny Taylor

A Prayer for HRH Prince Philip

God of our lives

We give thanks for the life of Prince Philip, for the love he shared among us and for his devotion to duty. We entrust him now to your love and mercy through our Redeemer Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Merciful God be close to all who mourn, especially the Queen and all members of the Royal Family. May they know the hope of your promises and the comfort of your love through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Heavenly Father as we look to the wider world, we bring before you the United States of America, as more racial tension has erupted. We also pray for other countries where war and unjust regimes are in control: Myanmar, Hong Kong, and many others. Nearer home we pray for Northern Ireland and the renewed tension following Brexit. We pray for leaders on all sides of the community, for the police, and those who are using this time to cause trouble.

Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Creator God, we pray for the Climate Crisis which is only now being recognised throughout the world. We pray for scientists, governments, and we ourselves, the general public, that we will acknowledge the harm we have caused to our world and work towards solutions. We pray particularly for the COP 26 Climate Change Conference in Glasgow in November and the G7 Summit in Cornwall on June 12th.

Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father we turn to pray for your Church - your people here on earth. Guide all our church leaders and those in positions of influence. Renew us all again with your life-giving Holy Spirit. We pray for Thy Kingdom Come (the annual global prayer movement) this year as the Church is encouraged to be refreshed in our faith, especially those who have felt isolated during this difficult time. Renew us with your spirit we pray.

Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Healing God we pray for those many people we know who are ill in mind, body, or spirit. Those who have long term health conditions, those who are coming to the end of their lives, and those who are suffering any kind of illness. Lord we pray for your healing balm to spirits who are weary, fresh hope for those who are losing hope, and courage to withstand pain where it is most severe. We pray too for your peace on all those who need it most at this time.

Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Finally, we take time to bring our own lives before you.... In a time of silence let us still ourselves and listen to our Father who we may only hear in the quietest of whispers...

(take time to be still and quiet)

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

We pray together the Lord's Prayer

Closing prayers

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He has given us new life and hope.

He has raised Jesus from the dead.

God has claimed us as his own.

He has brought us out of darkness.

He has made us light to the world.

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

God, who through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ
has given us the victory,
give you joy and peace in your faith;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you and those you love now and always.
All Amen.

*Closing music - Adrian plays Fugue from the end of Mendelssohn's 6th
Organ Sonata*

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