**SUNDAY SERVICE APRIL 26TH 2020**

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 ST MICHAEL’S CHURCH HOOLE

**JESUS ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS- 'YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE'**

***“Did not our hearts burn within us while He opened the Scriptures to us?”*** *Luke 24: v 32.*

**Welcome to our service this morning. We are celebrating the central truth of the Christian Faith -Jesus Has Risen from the dead; through His death on the cross He has conquered sin and death. Jesus is with us on our journey through life. Ask Him to stay with you.**

**EASTER GREETING**:

 We are risen with Christ

 **The Lord is risen**

 Eternal life is ours

 **The Lord is risen**

 Death has met its master

 **The Lord is risen**

 The way to heaven is open

 **The Lord is risen**

 He is risen indeed

 **Alleluia! Amen**

**HYMN** Our first hymn is a great hymn of praise to the risen Lord Jesus: At the Name of Jesus every knee shall Bow: https://youtu.be/OI2rKRCWmOU

1.  At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow,
every tongue confess him king of glory now;
‘tis the Father's pleasure, that we call him Lord,
who from the beginning was the mighty Word.

2 Humbled for a season, to receive a name
from the lips of sinners unto whom he came;
faithfully he bore it spotless to the last,
brought it back victorious when from death he passed.

3 Christians this Lord Jesus shall return again,
with His Father’s glory, with his angel train;

 for all wreaths of empire meet upon his brow,
and our hearts confess him King of glory now.

**Let us pray:**

**PRAYER OF THE WEEK:**

**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.**

**BIBLE READING Luke 24: v 13-35.**

On the road to Emmaus

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognising him.

He asked them, ‘What are you discussing together as you walk along?’

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, ‘Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?’

‘What things?’ he asked.

‘About Jesus of Nazareth,’ they replied. ‘He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.’

He said to them, ‘How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going further. But they urged him strongly, ‘Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.’ So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?’

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, ‘It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.’ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognised by them when he broke the bread.

**SERMON ‘With burning hearts’**

Lord Jesus we pray that you will make our hearts burn within us as we hear you word today. Help us to respond in joy and gratitude to you for our glorious salvation and gift of eternal life. Amen

Our daily walk round the village and beyond is a highlight of Peter and my Lockdown existence. It has been great to have encounters with old friends and also make new ones even while sticking to social distancing rules. Today’s Bible passage is the account of one of the most mind-blowing encounters of human history and it happened while Cleopas and his wife (or friend) were out for a walk.

 These 2 were ordinary followers of Jesus who had believed Jesus was the one they had all been waiting for, the one who was going to save God's people but instead disillusioned and distraught had witnessed his horrifying death by crucifixion in Jerusalem. On their walk they were talking about all that had happened in Jerusalem which included the incredible story of that same morning when some of the women disciples had visited the tomb of Jesus and found it empty.

And then a stranger joined them on their walk. It was Jesus of course but they failed to recognise Him.

The account of the events on the Emmaus Road is undoubtedly one of the finest stories in the world. It has sorrow, suspense, confusion, together with astonished recognition and excitement. And it has much more than that ; first it is not just story it is fact, truth. And even more than that- it is a model of stages of the Christian life -every one of you watching or reading this sermon is somewhere on this same journey.

First notice these 2 failed to recognise Him. How could that be?; it is in fact a phenomenon of many of the resurrection appearances that Jesus was the same but different- that seems to be a feature of His new Resurrection body. But perhaps more significant is the fact they were simply not expecting Him. You can hardly blame them; they had watched Him die an agonising death- no one expects a dead person to be walking down the street.

Here is a lesson for us all: so often we do not expect Jesus to be there ready to help when He is actually there alongside us all the time loving us, supporting us. Some of you will know the beautiful reading called ‘Footprints in the Sand’, which says the same thing. So now in the midst of this terrible pandemic, in the middle of lockdown, here is the first powerful lesson from this passage: Jesus is there for you; bring your situation, your agony to Him. Don’t miss out, don’t fail to get the help and strength you need from Him because you didn't expect to find Him here. Talk to Him in prayer; discover his loving presence for yourself.

And now look at the next part of the story: Jesus asks the pair what they are discussing? Incredulous they ask where He had been the last few days that He had to pose the question-self isolating perhaps! So they explain the reason for their distress. It must have taken a fair bit of courage on the part of Cleopas to admit they were followers of Jesus. After all the stranger might have been a spy and their lives would be in danger. But explain he does and reveals the failure of all their hopes together with that very morning the shock of the empty tomb. In reply Jesus tells them off for their foolishness and lack of faith and shows them that everything that had just occurred, all the details of Jesus’ death and resurrection, had happened exactly as had been prophesied in the Bible.

He shows them that the cross is not a tragedy but a triumph, that Jesus’ death is not a disaster but a deliverance, that the conquest of sin and death was the very purpose of His coming. In fact He unveiled to them the story of salvation in the Bible. Of course their Bible was just the Old Testament, the New had not yet been written. In the Bible we find the deepest truths about God, about us, our human condition and our need of salvation. ‘Our hearts burned within us’ they said as Jesus unwrapped the mysteries of Scripture. For the first time they understood from God's word and from the Word Himself something of the wonder of the free gift of salvation to the human race.

 Most of us at the moment have more time for Bible Study and prayer than usual. Use it wisely; do you have a grasp of the vast sweep of the whole thrilling story? You could start with reading through Mark’s Gospel by yourself as we have been doing in our midweek Christianity Explored sessions. You can watch the videos too and also join our weekly Zoom sessions on Wednesdays at 7.40pm.

So do you expect the presence of the Risen Jesus in your daily life? Does your heart burn within you, are you really excited as you read and study the Bible, understanding more day by day of the story which is beyond all stories?

 And finally let’s look at the last part of the story: the pair invite Jesus into their home. And He accepts. Then finally as He breaks bread as any guest would be invited to do first, they recognise Him at last. How? We don’t know but maybe it was his hands ; his hands would have been covered up to this point but now they were uncovered revealing the marks of the nails. Their eyes were opened we are told. At last they recognise Him. And Jesus disappeared from their sight.

And the ending. Well as you would have done with news like that. They went straight back to Jerusalem the way they had just come to say that it is true. Jesus is alive!

Notice the key -what leads to the joy and triumph of the finale- they invited Jesus into their home ; ‘Stay with us’. they said. Another lesson for us.

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus we pray that you will come and stay with us. We long that our hearts too will burn within us as we read your Word each day. Fill us with your resurrection joy and peace. Amen

Our next hymn picks up the theme of our eyes being opened – Once I was blind but now I see: Amazing Grace: https://youtu.be/p5NCyuRhoGY

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

T’was Grace that taught my heart to fear
And Grace, my fears relieved
How precious did that Grace appear
The hour I first believed

Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
’Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

**The Apostles' Creed**

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

**PRAYERS**

At this most difficult and perplexing time we turn to you, our Heavenly Father for strength and guidance.Walk for us Lord down the streets of our cities, towns and villages as we pray for our country and our world beset by pandemic – walk today where many of us cannot go because we are in lockdown, visit our friends and family, hug and kiss those whom we love and from whom we are separated, light the candle of love, protection and faith in all our hearts until we can be together again.

Lord in your mercy…… Hear our prayer

We pray for all our doctors, nurses and carers who continue to tend to the sick. We pray for all essential workers in utility companies, supermarkets, factories; for delivery men and those collecting our waste; for all those who are trying to keep this country functioning. We pray for all those who are home-schooling and for the children coping with learning in a strange environment. Give them your strength to keep up their wonderful work

Lord in your mercy….. Hear our prayer

We pray for the lonely, those whose mental capacity means that they find it hard to understand the present situation, those for whom life is just too much to bear. We pray for all those we know who are sick or suffering from whatever cause and also for their families. Grant them courage and perseverance and grant us continual commitment to recognise and help wherever and whenever we can

Lord in your mercy……Hear our prayer

We give thanks for the lives of all those known to us who have died recently and all those whose anniversary falls at this time. We pray for your continuing comfort for all those who mourn

Lord in your mercy….Hear our prayer

Abide with us through this day and this night. Abide with us in our homes and brief journeyings.

Abide with us in our seeking and our longings. Abide with us now and to eternity Amen

We join now in the prayer Jesus taught his followers to pray:

**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**

Our final hymn is a prayer of commitment to Jesus the Lord of sea and sky: I the Lord of sea and sky https://youtu.be/mgLwH5RdtPk

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard My people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin,
My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear My light to them?
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am Lord, Is it I, Lord?
I have heard You calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if You lead me.
I will hold Your people in my heart.*

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them,
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
Give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak My word to them
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am Lord, Is it I, Lord?*

**BLESSING**

May the Love of the Risen Lord Jesus draw you to Himself

May the Power of the Risen Lord Jesus strengthen you to serve Him

And may the Joy of the Risen Lord Jesus fill your hearts this Eastertide.

 And so may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and all those whom you love, now and for ever more. Amen

I do hope you have enjoyed our service today. Peter and I watched the video last night of the new record breaking number one hit with Captain Tom Moore and Michael Ball - 'You'll never Walk Alone'. How amazing and moving is that! What a great song while we are pondering the world's greatest true story- the Risen Jesus walking unrecognised beside 2 of his followers. Every Christian can say he will never walk alone. Jesus is there beside him every minute of life's journey in the good times and the bad, loving, supporting, guiding. Why not listen now:

https://youtu.be/LcouA\_oWsnU

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