



3RD SUNDAY OF EASTER – APRIL 26, 2020

PRAYER OF THE DAY: O God, your Son makes himself known to all his disciples in the making of the bread. Open the eyes of our faith, that we may see Him in His redeeming work, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

GATHERING SONG: HERE I AM TO WORSHIP

Light of the World
 You stepped down into darkness,
 Opened my eyes, let me see
 Beauty that made this heart adore You,
 Hope of a life spent with You

Chorus
 Here I am to worship
 Here I am to bow down,
 Here I am to say that You're my God
 You're altogether lovely
 Altogether worthy,
 Altogether wonderful to me.

King of all days
 Oh so highly exalted,
 Glorious in heaven above
 Humbly You came to the Earth You created,
 All for love's sake became poor.

And I'll never know how much it cost
 To see my sin upon that cross
 I'll never know how much it cost
 To see my sin upon that cross

THE WORD

ACTS 2:14a, 36-41 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call.

40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.

PSALM 116: 1-4, 12-19

I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice *and* my supplications.

2 Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon *him* as long as I live.

3 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.

4 Then called I upon the name of the LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.

What shall I render unto the LORD *for* all his benefits toward me?

13 I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.

14 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.

15 Precious in the sight of the LORD *is* the death of his saints.

16 O LORD, truly I *am* thy servant; I *am* thy servant, *and* the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.

17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.

18 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.

19 In the courts of the LORD'S house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

FIRST READING: 1Peter 1:17-23

And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning *here* in fear:

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers:

19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.

21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently:

23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

GOSPEL: Luke 24: 13-35

13 And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem *about* threescore furlongs.

14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

15 And it came to pass, that, while they communed *together* and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications *are* these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

18 And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

20 And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

21 But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.

22 Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre:

23 And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.

24 And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found *it* even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.

29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake, and gave to them.

31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

33 And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them.

34 Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

35 And they told what things *were done* in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

SERMON: HOPE

Interesting times we are living in! Mind you, every time in history has been *'INTERESTING'* for those living in any particular time. Each human being has been challenged, one way or the other, with different challenges that create doubt, fear and anxiety. What helps get us through these times is HOPE! Today, the world is full of these fears and doubts because of the Covid-19 Pandemic. It has exacerbated many of the problems of today's world. Economic distress, racial tensions, inequalities of various kinds. What pulls us together is a need to work as a whole to make things better. What holds us back is fear and indecision and perhaps a lack of faith. What unites us is HOPE!

In our text today, we find two men walking along the road, and their lives have become so very uncertain. They have become hopeless. Their lives have fallen apart. Jesus has been betrayed, arrested and finally crucified and buried. Too much has happened for these two men to take it all in and to understand it.

They said "Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people... our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel." Luke 24:19-21

They had HOPED Jesus would be the answer to their dreams. They had HOPED He would change their lives. They had HOPED He would make a difference in their world... but He was dead now.

There was no longer any hope. They were filled with despair, defeat and discouragement. Given the state of our planet today, many people may feel the same things. These two men were hurting, just as we are hurting now.

There was a recent movie where one of the heroes mockingly said, "Don't give me false hope. And one of the other characters replied: "It's not false hope if it's possible."

Hope in God is what makes us who we are. Hope in God is the essence of our being. David wrote: “Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who HOPE in his steadfast love” (Psalm 33:18). And again: “For you, O Lord, are my HOPE, my trust...” (Psalm 71:5). As children of a living God, we need hope in our lives. In fact, we can’t SURVIVE without hope.

Jesus kept the two men from recognizing Him. Why? Verse 15 states that Jesus knew his disciples were upset. He could see it in their faces and hear it in their voices, too. Yet, He kept them from recognizing Him? It may seem cruel that Jesus did this. So why did He?

Of course there is also the reasoning that these disciples needed to be kept in this state so they could focus on gaining a better understanding of Jesus as He explained the Scriptures to them. Had He simply revealed His identity to them on the road, they would have been so overcome with excitement that paying attention to anything Jesus said would have been a struggle.

‘But still...’ we think, Jesus could see they were hurting. Why couldn’t He have done something to relieve their pain sooner?

We ask these kinds of questions because we can see ourselves in this story. Most of us have probably found ourselves—or perhaps still sometimes find ourselves—in situations where we have more questions than answers. In really rough times, sometimes we aren’t even sure what questions we should be asking. When one of our loved ones is suffering through some tragedy that we can’t control, we ask ‘WHY’? We wonder where Jesus is. Why would He allow this to happen?

At such times, very little seems to make sense. What little we do understand only seems to cause more hurt and confusion. We empathize with these travelers, then, because we too have journeyed long and talked for hours with others on our personal roads to Emmaus. All the while, we strive to wrestle some sense of order out of the seeming chaos of our lives. We feel bad for the individuals in today’s gospel, because we feel bad for ourselves. We wonder why Jesus didn’t relieve their pain sooner, because we wonder why He doesn’t relieve ours.

And as understandable as all these questions are, they overlook and fail to appreciate the central and unmistakable fact Jesus was there. Missing that key fact, we run the risk of thinking that because Jesus doesn't act as we think He should, that then somehow His love and care for us is uncertain. What such thinking really means is that Jesus is not living up to our misguided and fallen expectations.

Thanks be to God that He does things His way, and not ours! He has done things as the Father wills, not as we will. He does it as the Son of God who so loved the world that He left the glory of heaven. He became man, to enact the plan of salvation complete with His death, burial, descent into hell, and now His resurrection. He has done this, as He does everything, all for love.

Jesus was with these disciples. He walked beside them. He talked with them. While He may not have immediately given them exactly what they might have wanted (or what we would have wanted), He provided them with all they needed. In this case, He gave them a fuller understanding of the Scriptures so they could begin to comprehend the fullness of the mystery of what had happened. He prepared them for what was to come.

I believe Jesus took the time to deal with THEIR hopelessness so that we'd know how to deal with OURS. All of us have faced times in life when we've become discouraged, downhearted and filled with hopelessness. Times when we've lost our jobs, or when our marriages fell apart, or when our health was deteriorating, or when people were mistreating us, or times when things just weren't going right. Most, if not all of us, have faced times when we felt boxed in and trapped.

And when He knew the time was right, and only then, He took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened to recognize their Lord.

Our reaction to Jesus in this story, and to how we perceive Him to be acting (or not acting) in our lives, should give us pause for thought.

We say we trust in God. We say our hope is in Him, but is it really? Or perhaps is our hope placed in other things, things that supplant God, or are treated with similar importance alongside God? For example, when facing a difficulty in our lives, do we have maybe 30% of our trust in God, 25 % in having all the information we think we need, 20% in our own ability to manage the situation, 15% in having whatever resources may be needed, and 10% on luck? Perhaps the breakdown for everyone is a bit different, and differs from one situation to the next. The bottom line, though, is that when we don't trust fully in God, we leave ourselves open to worry, fear and anxiety. Scripture is clear that the one who trusts fully in God has love, peace and grace.

Of course, none of us does this perfectly. But by considering the objects of our trust, it helps us to be aware that those negative emotions or stresses that come upon us in such situation are an indicator that our hope may not be as completely in our Lord as we might think. And this gives us a chance to take another look at the situation.

We are not just called to trust in God as if it some kind of authoritarian demand for unquestioning obedience. Rather, we are invited to trust Him. We are invited to turn to Him and rest in His grace and mercy. We are invited to trust that His steadfast love will provide for our every need, in every circumstance, in according to His good and gracious will.

And this is why the most important event of the story happens in verse 15: Jesus was with them. His presence and provision wasn't dependent on their recognizing Him; He was with them, regardless.

In the same way, Jesus is with each one of us—just as He promised when we were baptized into His body, the Church, and into His death and resurrection.

We may not always recognize Jesus' presence, but He is still with us. We may not understand all that is going on in our lives, but He is still with us. We may not have everything we want or think we need, but He is still with us, providing us with what we truly need.

Just as Jesus revealed Himself to His followers in the breaking of the bread—when He knew that they were ready—so, too, we trust that Christ will reveal Himself and His ways to us in the midst of our circumstances when He and we are ready.

Until then, we hold tightly to His promise to never leave us nor forsake us. We cling to the promise of His steadfast love and His promise to come to us with His very real presence in the bread and the wine of Holy Communion. There we have solid confirmation, visible and tangible to our faith, that Jesus is with us, and within us.

What's more, when we do have the opportunity together in our fear and confusion, He speaks to us through the words of the liturgy and prayers. We may write the words but it is Jesus' words that reach you. We hear the words spoken, "*the body of Christ, given for you*" and "*the blood of Christ, shed for you.*" Each phrase carries the underlying message from Jesus: "***I am with you always.***"

This gospel story of these disciples' journey to Emmaus and their encounter with the risen Savior reminds us of a simple yet profound truth: Jesus doesn't promise us answers or solutions exactly when and how we want them. Instead, we are offered a much more blessed and certainly more needful gift: We are given our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Thanks be to God that He does this His way.

AN INVITATION:

William Sangster (an British Evangelical Minister) headed a revival movement in the British Isles after WW2. His ministry was cut short by a disease that ended up paralyzing his body, even his vocal chords. On his last Easter Sunday on earth, still able to move his fingers, he printed a note to his daughter who had told him it was Easter Sunday. It read, "How terrible to wake up on Easter and have no voice to shout, 'He is risen!' But far worse, to have a voice and not want to shout."

Are there times OUR hearts are slow to believe? Maybe you're sitting there this morning and you're not really sure if you truly believe all this Jesus stuff or not. I wish we had time to go through all the evidence that Jesus really is who He says He is... But what I can tell you this morning is that even historians agree that Jesus is real. And we have eyewitness

accounts captured over a period of 40 days after Jesus' death that He truly was raised from the dead.

Now, before you think I'm mainly talking to people who have not yet placed their faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior... I'm talking to all of us... myself included! Are we satisfied with just coming to church on a normal Sunday morning? Have we decided that just hearing about Jesus once a week is good enough? Or do we truly desire to experience the presence of the Messiah and explore the length and width and depth and height of His love for us?

The Lord Jesus never presses Himself upon anybody; He always waits for an invitation. He will pass on if we allow Him to do so. If He is not invited to come in we will be left without the spiritual help that we might have experienced. Let's all invite Him in today!

AMEN

HYMN OF THE DAY: WHAT A BEAUTIFUL NAME

You didn't want heaven without us
 So Jesus, You brought heaven down
 My sin was great, Your Love was greater
 What could separate us now

Death could not hold You, the veil tore before You
 You silenced the boast, of sin and grave
 The heavens are roaring, the praise of Your glory
 For You are raised to life again

You have not rival, You have no equal
 Now and forever, God You reign
 Yours is the Kingdom, Yours is the glory
 Yours is the Name, above all names

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION:

*Following the words, “**Lord, in your mercy**” would the people respond, “**Hear our prayer**”.*

We draw near to God as children and heirs of Christ’s promise. We pray for all the people of God, for the nations and our world, and for those in need. For the communities of the Sunshine Coast and for communities throughout the world, help us to see ourselves in our neighbours, especially those who we believe differ from us. Draw us together in your name to serve those who are hungry, poor and oppressed. **Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.**

For the well-being of the earth as we continue on in this very challenging year entrusted with its care, give us imagination and energy to see ways to steward the earth’s limited resources and to conform ourselves to its natural goodness. **Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.**

For those who are ill and for all who lack the basic needs of life, transform our love for them with the vision of eyes that have seen the salvation of God. Comfort those who are experiencing great loss and for those taking care of others. At this time we pray for Brenda and Bronwyn, Ed and Gwen, Bud, Randi, Karsten, Erika, Val and those we now remember aloud or silently. (pause) Lord, help us to know best best to support them. **Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.**

For peace among nations, for peace in our homes and for peace in our hearts, urge us to cry out at injustice until righteousness prevails. **Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.**

We especially continue to pray for those infected with the Coronavirus Disease and who are affected, in any way, by it. We especially pray for all those medical individuals who are caring for the sick and those who are researching a cure. **Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.**

We realize that we are human and succumb to the temptations of the sin Jesus spoke of. We understand the pain we cause others and ourselves. We also pray for forgiveness and for the will to forgive others. We especially need to pray for those affected by the tragedy in Nova Scotia. We cannot begin to understand how and why this happened. We can pray for those so tragically affected. **Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer.**

Joining our voices with your faithful ones in every time and place, we offer our prayers in the name of the Risen One, Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

AMEN

SHARING OF THE PEACE: If you are with someone, please do, if not, perhaps call someone.

OFFERING PRAYER: God of Life, the gifts we bring are our gifts of time, our possessions and our talents. These are the resources of our life and labour. You have given these to us to be good and faithful stewards of all we have. Keep us faithful and generous as we live our life for you.

Amen

LORD'S PRAYER:

Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name,
 Your kingdom come, your will be done,
 On earth as in heaven.
 Give us today our daily bread.
 Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
 Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
 For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
 Now and forever. Amen

BENEDICTION:

Dear God. We pray for your encouragement. I humbly ask for a renewal of hope within us. Forgive us for our times of doubt and for getting caught up in self pity. We pray about our impatience and anxiety. Calm us down O Lord. Please guide every step we take and decision we must make. Watch over us and keep us from harm. Amen

SENDING SONG: MY HOPE IS IN YOU

I meet with You
 And my soul sings out
 As Your word throws
 Doubt far away

I sing to You
 And my heart cries holy
 Hallelujah! Father, You're near

My hope is in You Lord
All the day long
I won't be shaken by drought or storm

A peace that passes
understanding is my song
and I sing My hope is in You Alone

I wait for You
And my soul finds rest
In my selfishness You
Show me grace

I will wait on You
You are my refuge
I will wait on You
You are my refuge

DISMISSAL: Go in Peace. We all miss being together and we will be again. Take care of one another. Call one another. Blessings to everyone.