**BENEFICE YOUTUBE SERVICE 18TH APRIL 2021 EASTER 3**

**The sung creed by Laudate**

**Welcome** **and Opening – Revd Mark Poole**

Praise God! For the Lord our God the almighty reigns! Let us rejoice and be glad and give him the glory.

Wherever you are joining us from today, you are warmly welcome as we gather to worship the risen Lord Jesus.

Let us pray,

Loving God our Father, in our need, and bringing with us the needs of the whole world, we come to worship and glorify you.

Lord Jesus Christ, you who knows the sorrows and joys of what being human is like, we come to you seeking your mercy and grace.

Faithful Spirit, with all our fears and wounds and scars, we come to you in hope and love.

We come, with all that we are because you invite us to come, and you have promised never to turn us away. To you be glory, honour and praise forever. **Amen.**

**Hymn – To God Be The Glory**

To God be the glory, great things he hath done!
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,
who yielded his life an atonement for sin,
and opened the life-gate that all may go in.
*Chorus:*
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father through Jesus the Son,
and give him the glory, great things he hath done!

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
to every believer the promise of God;
the vilest offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.
*Chorus:*
Great things he hath taught us, great things he hath done,
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
but purer, and higher, and greater will be
our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see.

**Confession and Absolution – Mary and Ged Murray**

In the silence of your love, we bring you the things that trouble us, that harm us, that make us feel ashamed or afraid.

*Silence*

In the silence of your love, we confess the hurt we have inflicted on you, on one another and on your planet.

*Silence*

**God have mercy on us. Christ have mercy on us, God have mercy on us.**

*Silence*

Listen to the words of Jesus, words that we can trust: ‘Do not be afraid, your sins are forgiven. I love you. Come and follow me. Thanks be to God.

**Amen.**

**Reading – Luke 24:36b-48 – Arnie and Ennis Tweddle**

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

**Song – Do Not Be Afraid**

*Chorus: Do not be afraid, For I have redeemed you.
I have called you by your name; You are mine.*When you walk through the waters I'll be with you,
You will never have to sink beneath the waves. *Chorus*

When the fire is burning all around you,
You will never be consumed by the flames. *Chorus*
When the fear of loneliness is looming,
Then remember I am at your side. *Chorus*When you dwell in the exile of a stranger,
Remember you are precious in my eyes. *Chorus*
You are mine, O my child; I am your father,
And I love you with a perfect love. *Chorus*

**Homily** - Revd Keith Albans

Luke 24:40 “And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet”

Thursday of this past week marked the second anniversary of the terrible fire which engulfed the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, causing unimaginable and catastrophic damage. I visited the city at the beginning of 2020 and walked around the perimeter of the site – and the thing which was most noticeable was the series of wooden frames which had been constructed to support the exposed stonework and give the building some stability while the surveyors and architects make their plans for the renovations to begin. And in due course, it would be lovely to go and see it fully restored – by which time those wooden supports will be long gone, but I suspect that there will still be the signs of what happened in that fire and things that are changed and look different to what was there before.

We’ve reached the third Sunday of Easter, and the lectionary gospel readings are giving us passages designed to help us ponder and tease out the meanings and our understandings of resurrection, through the accounts we have of the disciples’ early encounters with the risen Jesus. Last week it was Thomas, demanding a personal encounter rather than relying on what his friends told him, a request which is granted but with the caveat that the ones believing without seeing – and that’s you and me – are somehow more blessed. This week we have the story from Luke’s account, which follows straight on from the incident on the Emmaus road, when the excited pair who’d met Jesus have run back to Jerusalem to share their news, only to discover people saying “Yeah! We know!” – Jesus has beaten them to it, and appeared to Simon! And then he appears again – and they’re all scared out of their skins!

I’ve sometimes compared the Christmas stories in the gospels with the introduction to a symphony – establishing themes and motifs which will be developed in the main body of the work. Extending that analogy, one might compare the resurrection accounts as a kind of musical coda – looking back and reminding us where we have been. So some commentators point out interesting parallels between the story we heard earlier and the angelic appearances to Elizabeth and Mary right back at the beginning of the gospel…

But more significantly, I think we can ask ourselves; “what questions is Luke trying to answer by including the resurrection stories that he does?” Because clearly by the time he is writing there was a collection of stories that had been gathered – so why this one? I think he has two questions in mind and one particularly important assertion that he intends making.

The first question is the obvious one – is the resurrection real? I might answer that by responding “it depends on what you mean by real!” but Luke, as with the other gospels, gives us the tantalising mix of things which underline the risen Jesus’ physicality, together with those which make him resemble a ghost. In the verse we read, note the things Luke includes to emphasise the former… He speaks (v36), he asks them to touch him (v39), he shows them him hands and feet (v40) and, because Luke’s Jesus always loves a meal, we have the piece of broiled fish (v42) … In his earthly ministry, Jesus has shown real concern for physical needs – he is no super pious spiritual teacher – and so, whatever else we may understand about resurrection, it is as much to do with the physical realm as the spiritual.

The second question is harder to articulate, but it’s something like “Did we miss something?” – the sort of question that you ask on a car journey where you’ve clearly missed a turning or a signpost, or asked perhaps by the doctors when someone’s condition takes a turn for the worse… On the road to Emmaus, Jesus takes the two disciples through the entirety of the scriptures, and then again, back here in Jerusalem he does it again – “the law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms” (v44) and in v46 the idea of the suffering Messiah… This is not about pointing out proof texts – it’s more like looking at the scriptures through the filter of experience and allowing what you see to challenge your preconceptions or assumptions… Put at its most simple, the common belief that “if we believe in God and live a blameless life, we’re blessed and proper” would equate in most minds to the assumption that God’s Messiah would be universally acknowledged, welcomed and honoured… but read the story of Moses and the lives of many of the prophets and that’s shown up as bunkum! And Isaiah’s vision of the Suffering Servant gives a further clue as to how the simplistic equation can be challenged… So Luke wants us to think back through Jesus’ life, to think back of what we know of God through the scriptures, and to take that to the heart of what we mean by and proclaim as resurrection faith.

Which leads me back to the shell of Notre Dame Cathedral and to the assertion that Luke wants to make. I suspect that, for many, Tom and Jerry have a lot to answer for in confusing our understanding of resurrection! In so many of those cartoons a character will be flattened by a steam roller, only to reanimate, inflate, shake themselves down and carry on as if nothing has happened. How easy to extrapolate from that and see resurrection as a simple “bounce-back” and carry on. But that is not what Luke and the other gospel writers proclaim, and neither, thank God, is it what Christin faith, doctrine, art and hymnody have witnessed to. “He showed them his hands and his feet” – and why? Because they bear the scars of the nails – the resurrection has not undone the crucifixion but rather it has transformed its effect… So Paul, shows early Christian teaching to be on the one hand, “God raised Christ” (1 Cor 15) and “we proclaim Christ crucified”, while Charles Wesley writes “Those dear tokens of his passion, still his dazzling body bears”, and the Victorian hymn-writers Matthew Bridges and Geoffrey Thring put it like this; “Crown him the Lord of love, behold his hands and side – rich wounds, yet visible above, in beauty glorified.”

“He showed them his hands and his feet” (v40) and “You are witnesses of these things” (v48) – Luke is making clear that resurrection faith declares, yes, that Jesus is risen, but also that the risen Jesus understands the depths of our suffering, our confusion, our struggles and our woundedness, and therefore we do not need to be afraid to offer all our sorrows and wounds to him. He will transform them, and enable us to be healed and renewed – though scars may well remain – for they are part of our story of faith and, as Jesus was keen to remind his followers when he appeared to them, that story of faith is one that goes way back and has been lived by the people of God from the days of Moses and before. Thanks be to God, Amen.

**Prayers of Intercession – Victoria Beale**

We are your people Lord in this time and place, and you have called us to pray for those in need.

We pray for the people whose names the world knows, whose stories are told on social media and in the daily news*….(silence)*

*God in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

We pray for people in places of suffering, whose names only you and their friends and families know, and whose lives you cherish. Transform their wounds and scars of sorrow, anguish and pain by your resurrection power*….(silence)*

*God in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

We pray for the people whose names and lives we know, those who today are in pain or distress or trouble, those who are happy, those who are sad. Through the power of your suffering and resurrection bring them freedom, hope and fulness of life*….(silence)*

*God in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

We pray for ourselves, loving God, friend of those who suffer and healer of all who grieve. You know each of us by name. Touch our wounds, visible and invisible. In the power of your resurrection glory make us loving and compassionate. Make us into the people you want us to be, so that our hands become your hands for the healing of the world. And when that hurts, reassure us how much you love us*….(silence)*

*We pray in the name of the risen Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

*As our Saviour taught us so we 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.

**Hymn – Thine Be The Glory**

Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son;
endless is the victory, thou o'er death hast won;
angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave clothes where thy body lay.
*Refrain:
Thine be the glory, risen conquering Son,
Endless is the vict'ry, thou o'er death hast won.*

Lo! 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 her Lord now liveth, death hath lost its sting.
*Refrain:
Thine be the glory, risen conquering Son,
Endless is the vict'ry, thou o'er death hast won.*

No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of life;
life is naught without thee; aid us in our strife;
make us more than conquerors, through thy deathless love:
bring us safe through Jordan to thy home above.
*Refrain:
Thine be the glory, risen conquering Son,
Endless is the vict'ry, thou o'er death hast won.*

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**Sending and Blessing – Revd Mark Poole**

Christ has no body on earth, but ours, no hands but ours, no feet but ours. Ours are the eyes through which Christ’s compassion is to look out for the world. Ours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good. Ours are the hands with which he is to bless us now.

May God the Father who created us, empower us to do His will.

May God the Son who walks by our side and who shares our sorrows and joys look with compassion on all our doings.

May God the Holy Spirit who inspires humankind with the power and goodness of God’s will fill our lives with hope and love.

And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us all, and all those whom we love and pray for, this day and for evermore.

Amen.

Go into the world to walk in God’s light, to rejoice in God’s love and to reflect God’s glory. Alleluia! Thanks be to God.