

Third Sunday of Easter

THE LAKESIDE

INVOCATION

+ In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen
Christ is risen! Alleluia!
He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

PERSONAL REFLECTION

In your own words ask God to be with you in this time of prayer...

Then take a few moments to reflect on your life in the last few days, and in your own words speak to God about it, asking him to amend what is wrong, and to affirm what is good.

Then say:

Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy on me.

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

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.

READINGS

Read: Acts 2.14 & 36 – 41

The reading continues the account of Peter's address to the people on the Day of Pentecost, when some said the apostles were filled with wine. His words had their intended effect – the people were 'cut to the heart,' and asked what they should do. 'Repent and be baptized,' Peter responded. Repentance is about a deep change of heart, turning around and facing another way, rejecting the ways of the world, as Peter said to the crowd.

Take time to reflect on the reading; ask yourself what your baptism means to you: has it been about facing another way.

Say: Psalm 116, verses 1–7

Read: Luke 24.13–35

Reflect on the reading, imagining the scene. Think about Cleopas says in verse 21 about their hopes for the Messiah: what kind of person would have fulfilled that expectation?

The following reflection was given on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land at Abu Ghosh, about ten kilometers from Jerusalem, which 'stands in' these days for Emmaus, the exact location of which is unknown.

REFLECTION

The invitation that Jesus extends to us to walk with him is not as straightforward as it may seem. Where do we find him? What path does he travel?

Cleopas and his companion experienced this problem. Jesus was beside them but they did not recognise him. Their difficulty seems to have been bound up with their understanding of what he really was about: as they said to him, they had been hoping that he was the man to liberate Israel. Their hope seems to have been that the Messiah would free their land from oppression; that he would throw off the Roman yoke and overcome the history of domination and

exile. David had made them top nation; great David's greater son would restore that lost status – and do so for ever.

The prophets are full of this theme of restoration; we heard two examples today. At the Shrine of the Book there is the scroll of Isaiah with the words:

Comfort, comfort my people;
– it is the voice of your God;
speak tenderly to Jerusalem and tell her this,
that she has fulfilled her term of bondage,
that her penalty is paid ... *Isa 40.1, 2*

And from the Book of Ezekiel:

I will take you out of the nations and gather you from every land and bring you to your own soil. I will sprinkle clean water over you, and you shall be cleansed from all that defiles you... I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; ...you shall become my people, and I will become your God. I will call to the corn and make it plentiful.

Ezekiel 36.24-29

But this is not all that the prophets say. They speak also of the suffering servant, the one who makes restoration possible by this own self-sacrifice; the one who makes peace by bearing the sins of others. The words of Isaiah are well known:

But he was pierced for our transgressions,
tortured for our iniquities;
the chastisement he bore is health for us
and by his scourging we are healed. *Isaiah 53.5*

This liberation through suffering was not seen by the prophets as just for Israel, but for all nations. God came among us to overcome division and strife, to make all things new by reconciling the world

to himself, and he did this by bearing the burden of the world's pain and evil.

Making peace through this kind of self-giving is part of the ordinary experience of most people. When we are divided against one another – individuals, groups, nations – reconciliation requires a peace-maker. We actually appoint people specially to undertake this work, e.g. diplomats, industrial conciliators, and marriage counsellors. And this peace-making is a costly process because the peace-maker inevitable gives something of him- or herself in building the bridge of reconciliation. Peace-making involves self-sacrifice, putting yourself on the line, accepting that you will be hurt as you bear the anger, the hurt, the lack of trust.

Jesus was the suffering servant, the peace-maker who build the bridge of reconciliation between God and his creation that no-one else could build. 'Through him', wrote St Paul, 'God chose to reconcile the whole universe to himself, making peace through the shedding of his blood on the cross.' (*Colossians 1.20*) At Emmaus, it was when Jesus broke the bread – when he performed the sign of his self-giving – that he was recognised. And it is among those who are broken in the same way that he is to be found today: those who give themselves to make peace: between brothers, families, races, and nations; and he is also to be found among those who are broken because they bear the burden of the world's evil: its hatred, greed, fear, meanness and brutality. Christ is found amongst the peace-makers, the refugees, the starving, the oppressed, the outcast and the marginalised. Martin Luther King said that he believed that all unmerited suffering to be redemptive. I am reminded of his words at Yad Vashem (the Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem) and by the refugee camps in this land, and I will try to remember them when I see on the news the anguished faces of the world's hungry, the peasants of Latin America or the war-torn victims of the battles in Beirut.

Wherever people work for peace, true peace which faces and absorbs conflict rather than merely papers it over, there Jesus is to be found. This morning a few of us visited Neve Shalom, the Oasis of Peace. It is a community of Arabs and Jews trying to work together so show this land that it is possible for the two peoples to live together. They are not Christians, but who would deny that they do the work of Christ?

Pause and reflect.

PRAISE

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:
he has claimed us as his own.

He has brought us out of darkness:
he has made us a light to the world.

Christ once raised from the dead dies no more:
death has no more dominion over him.

In dying he died to sin once and for all:
in living he lives to God.

See yourselves therefore as dead to sin
and alive to God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

A time of free prayer and intercession. You may like to use the traditional five-fold pattern:

For the Church

For the World

For family, friends, neighbours and the local community
For the sick and all in need, near and far
For those who have died

At the end:

Merciful Father,
accept my prayers,
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

CONCLUSION

Our Father...

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
The love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all, now and for ever.
Amen