

27th April, 2025

The paper-version Service



To Begin: Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe, light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's

Service.

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Hymn:

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.

Thine be the glory, risen,
conquering Son;
endless is the victory Thou o'er
death hast won.

Lo! Jesus meets us, risen from the
tomb.
Lovingly He greets us, scatters fear
and gloom;
let His church with gladness hymns
of triumph sing,

for the Lord now liveth; death hath
lost its sting.

Thine be the glory, risen,
conquering Son;
endless is the victory Thou o'er
death hast won.

No more we doubt Thee, glorious
Prince of life!!
Life is nought 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.

Thine be the glory, risen,
conquering Son;
endless is the victory Thou o'er
death hast won.

The Sermon by Val Lucas

Read Isaiah 43:8-13 and Luke 24:36-53 – Being Commissioned

Easter is over, Lent fasting is over for another year. Probably the easter eggs, sweets and chocolate are all over too! The long-promised diet has definitely begun.

The cross put up temporarily outside churches or on hill tops may still be there, but now a silent reminder of what easter was all about. Everyone's back to work and normal life is resuming. Children are returning to school. Thinking when their next treat will be.....probably Christmas.

Easter is the most important event in the Christian calendar. Jesus died for us, he was sacrificed so all our sins are forgiven, on the third day he rose from the dead. Our faith revolves around the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Are we like the children, waiting now until Christmas, the birth of our Saviour, when we can so visually share Jesus again with the world.

Absolutely not! Luke's passage this morning has a list of jobs for all believers to do. The resurrection of Jesus has given us lots of work to do.

Let's have a closer look at what Luke is asking of us today.

Firstly, Luke calls us all to be witnesses. Witnesses and witness statements are incredibly important, they provide information that determines the truth. In this day and age of fake news, establishing the truth is very difficult. As Christians we must share evidence of the resurrection and not be a silent witness.

Luke talks about the evidence witnessed by the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead. He had spoken with them, ate with them. He opened their minds to the scriptures so they could understand how Jesus had fulfilled the promises in the old testament.

The disciples witness of the resurrected Jesus is amazing, they walked, ate and talked with the resurrected Jesus, they saw him with their own eyes. But what is even more amazing is that we too have met with the same resurrected Jesus. Our eyes have been opened to the love and joy of reading and studying the bible.

Every believer has a testimony, a witness statement they can share with others about how they know Jesus. It may have been through an Alpha course, belonging to a church family since birth or having a life changing encounter with Jesus. Our work starts with this testimony, do not think your testimony isn't important, it is just as important as the disciples meeting with the risen Christ.

Lots of bible courses including Alpha suggest that we prepare our own witness statement, our testimony to share with others. We all know how powerful ours and other's testimonies are. When testimonies are told in church or shared in small groups, they speak to our spirit, confirm the risen Jesus and give us encouragement. As a challenge today, whilst we're having coffee later, share your testimony with someone who doesn't know you very well.

Secondly, Luke does not stop at asking the disciples to share their witness of meeting Jesus. He goes further, in giving them a commission to proclaim repentance

and forgiveness of sins in his name. This would begin in Jerusalem and then spread out to all nations. Today we know that the disciples and followers of Jesus are achieving this mission. At the present time it is estimated there are 2.645 billion Christians and by 2050 it will reach 3 billion. Only 27% of countries have no gospel access.

You might say the job's been done, no need to worry about us doing anything. 3 million out of a predicted population of 8.5 billion shows there is still work to be done. Luke's commission is our role and job description too. Alongside being witnesses, we are being commissioned to proclaim repentance and forgiveness.

Two specific actions are essential to our mission, repentance and forgiveness. We repented of our sin of not knowing Jesus in our lives and Jesus forgave us. We now have a new life in him. The commission is to share this good news of Jesus with the world.

Knowing Jesus is key but continuing to share the actions of repentance and forgiveness is something the world needs. As Christians showing evidence of how repentance and forgiveness works is instrumental to peace. In memory of Pope Francis, he said to the world so many times, if we do not learn to forgive one another we will always be at war. As the Lord has forgiven you, so you should forgive others too.

The two actions are interrelated. Repentance recognizes that we did something wrong, there is a genuine remorse and desire to make amends. It frees us from the burden of sin and its consequences, giving hope for the future.

Forgiveness allows for the healing of wounds, restoration of relationships, reducing stress, anxiety and depression. Relationships and conflicts are restored as understanding and compassion is demonstrated. How different would the world look if this was a reality.

There are lots of Christian testimonies of forgiveness. Corrie Ten Boom went on to emphasize forgiveness, praying for the forgiveness of those who had committed the atrocities of the holocaust. Nelson Mandela, raised a methodist Christian, demonstrated a powerful act of forgiveness, when released from prison in 1990, instead of seeking revenge on his former oppressors he worked to build a new South Africa. Archbishop Desmond Tutu emphasized the importance of repenting and forgiveness as a path to healing and reconciliation, advocating a four step process, admitting wrongdoing, giving an honest account, asking for and granting forgiveness and renewing or releasing relationships.

Christians are born to be peace makers. Peace doesn't mean apathy or passivity but proactively working in the tools of the commission. Sharing our testimonies and actively encouraging Repentance and forgiveness. Modelling it in our own lives all the time.

Luke says to go out to all nations, this may be scary, some Christians will be called to do that, but for the majority of us, it will be mission where we are now. Or as a close friend said, bloom where you are planted. We are called to share Jesus in the home, with spouses and children, in the workplace, in our local communities, our

voluntary work even our church life. Everywhere we are we are called to share Jesus and not be a silent witness.

Thirdly, Luke tells us that Jesus told the disciples to go home and wait for the Holy Spirit. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that we are all helped to complete our commission. We do not do Christ's work alone. The Holy Spirit is freely given to all believers. Luke reminds us that Jesus is fulfilling more of the Old Testament as promised in Joel.....I will pour out my spirit on all people.

Before the Holy Spirit came, the disciples witnessed Jesus physically departing from earth and rising to heaven. Completing his earthly mission and fulfilling prophecies. Jesus returned to heaven leaving behind his holy spirit to dwell in us so that we can continue his mission.

It is this Holy spirit that enables us to share our testimonies, to be evangelists, peace makers, to be able to repent and forgive and share this with the world. Whatever situation we find ourselves in, the Holy spirit helps us to full fill the commission in all those we meet.

Today we may feel we need more of the Holy Spirit, that the thought of the commission makes us weary and stressed.

The situation of being peacemakers and the conflict we are in is exhausting.

Let's just take a few minutes in quiet prayer asking Jesus for more of his Holy Spirit.

Thank you, Jesus, for answering our prayer and giving us more of your spirit. Send us out renewed in our commission. Give us peace not fear, belief not doubt and sharing not silence. Amen.

2nd Sunday of Easter: Almighty Father, you have given your only Son to die for our sins and to rise again for our justification: grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness that we may always serve you in pureness of living and truth; through the merits of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The 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. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. **Amen.**

At the Church of the Good Shepherd

- Tea and Chat and Bowls: May 21st at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: May 28th at 10.30am in Church Hall.
- The Community Cupboard, 2:45pm every Thursday in Church.