

Sunday April 26th

Psalm 116

¹ I love the LORD because he hears my voice
and my prayer for mercy.

² Because he bends down to listen,
I will pray as long as I have breath!

Hymn: Good Christians all rejoice and sing!

1 Good Christians all, rejoice and sing!
Now is the triumph of our King!
To all the world glad news bring:
"Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!"

2 The Lord of life is ris'n today;
death's mighty stone is rolled away;
let ev'ry tongue rejoice and say:
"Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!"

3 We praise in songs of victory
that Love, that Life, which cannot die,
and sing with hearts uplifted high:
"Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!"



C. A. Alington

Prayer of Praise

Loving God, we praise you once more for the Good News of Easter, the triumphant message of resurrection- new hope, new joy, new life! Christ is risen!

We praise you for what we see in the Easter stories- your love that could not be kept down, your purpose that could not be defeated, your goodness that could not be destroyed. Christ is risen!

Teach us that what was true then is true now- that resurrection is not just about life after death but about constant new beginnings, the way you are able to transform every part of our lives, the way you are always bringing renewal- and may that truth inspire us to keep on following you not only through the good but the bad. Christ is risen!

When life seems hard, when we feel overwhelmed by trials and temptations, when faith seems to fly in the face of reason, assure us once more that your love will not be overcome. Christ is risen!

Loving God grant us the deep inner assurance which only Easter can bring- that whatever life brings, whatever we face, however things may seem, your will shall be done and your kingdom come. Christ is risen.

Our Father.....

Reading: Luke 24: 13-35 The Road to Emmaus (The Message translation)

13-16 That same day two of them were walking to the village Emmaus, about seven miles out of Jerusalem. They were deep in conversation, going over all these things that had happened. In the middle of their talk and questions, Jesus came up and walked along with them. But they were not able to recognize who he was.

17-18 He asked, "What's this you're discussing so intently as you walk along?"

They just stood there, long-faced, like they had lost their best friend. Then one of them, his name was Cleopas, said, "Are you the only one in Jerusalem who hasn't heard what's happened during the last few days?"

19-24 He said, "What has happened?"

They said, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene. He was a man of God, a prophet, dynamic in work and word, blessed by both God and all the people. Then our high priests and leaders betrayed him, got him sentenced to death, and crucified him. And we had our hopes up that he was the One, the One about to deliver Israel. And it is now the third day since it happened. But now some of our women have completely confused us. Early this morning they were at the tomb and couldn't find his body. They came back with the story that they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. Some of our friends went off to the tomb to check and found it empty just as the women said, but they didn't see Jesus."

25-27 Then he said to them, "So thick-headed! So slow-hearted! Why can't you simply believe all that the prophets said? Don't you see that these things had to happen, that the Messiah had to suffer and only then enter into his glory?" Then he started at the beginning, with the Books of Moses, and went on through all the Prophets, pointing out everything in the Scriptures that referred to him.

28-31 They came to the edge of the village where they were headed. He acted as if he were going on but they pressed him: "Stay and have supper with us. It's nearly evening; the day is done." So he went in with them. And here is what happened: He sat down at the table with them. Taking the bread, he blessed and broke and gave it to them. At that moment, open-eyed, wide-eyed, they recognized him. And then he disappeared.

32 Back and forth they talked. "Didn't we feel on fire as he conversed with us on the road, as he opened up the Scriptures for us?"

33-34 They didn't waste a minute. They were up and on their way back to Jerusalem. They found the Eleven and their friends gathered together, talking away: "It's really happened! The Master has been raised up—Simon saw him!"

35 Then the two went over everything that happened on the road and how they recognized him when he broke the bread.

Reflection

This lockdown has, it seems, created two groups of people, those for whom life has become much more hectic and busy and worrying in many ways when as keyworkers they continue to do their jobs with a heightened sense of purpose and then there are those many for whom this has been the opposite. Life seems to have come to a halt, everything has stopped, and we have found new ways of living.

Many of us have taken the opportunity to use our permitted exercise time to go for a walk in the sunshine, it has to be said that the weather has helped. Some of you will have seen this photo I posted a few days ago. It's only the path in the corner of Selly Oak park that goes at the back of the houses but Joel's reaction to this view cheered me up all day.



And so we hear this well-known story of the disciples on the way to Emmaus, not walking because they had time on their hands but walking to get where they needed to be. So engrossed in their own situation were they that they missed the most important point of all that it was Jesus walking alongside them.

Whichever group we find ourselves in, those with too much to do or those with very little to do we are journeying into the unknown daily as we navigate this situation. We listen to the news every day and it's not easy, we're faced with death each day, just as the disciples had been.

Are we so busy with our own situation that we too have missed the fact that Jesus is there walking alongside us even in those times that feel hard, in fact especially in those times when life feels like it's getting on top of us. This brought to mind for me the poem Footprints by Margaret Fishback.

*One night I dreamed a dream.
As I was walking along the beach with my Lord.
Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life.
For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand,
One belonging to me and one to my Lord.*

*After the last scene of my life flashed before me,
I looked back at the footprints in the sand.*

*I noticed that at many times along the path of my life,
especially at the very lowest and saddest times,
there was only one set of footprints.*

*This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it.
"Lord, you said once I decided to follow you,
You'd walk with me all the way.
But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life,
there was only one set of footprints.
I don't understand why, when I needed You the most, You would leave me."*

*He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you
Never, ever, during your trials and testings.
When you saw only one set of footprints,
It was then that I carried you."*

A reflective Prayer:

I can understand them being devastated and totally absorbed in their shattered hopes and disillusionment, but I don't really get why they didn't recognise Jesus. I mean, how hard could it be? This is Jesus we are talking about. I mean even a blind man recognised him. Even I would recognise him, wouldn't I?

They get some credit. Well, a lot of credit really, for listening to what he said and for inviting him in for a bite to eat. But really, you'd think they would have known it was him far earlier, wouldn't you? No wonder he called them dull! They were a just a little bit slow on the uptake weren't they!

You and me, we'd both know right away if Jesus was with us, wouldn't we?

Do you mind!? I'm trying to write. Sorry that was my neighbour, wanting me to look at something or other.

As I was saying, we would recognise Jesus straight away, wouldn't we...?

Lord Jesus,
thank you that although the Emmaus travellers
took a while to recognise you,
when they did they rushed back
to tell the other disciples.

Forgive us when we are too preoccupied
to hear your words
or to recognise your presence among us today
and thus miss your explosive love
that can transform, unite and resurrect
lives and communities to the Father's glory.

Amen.

Hymn: Father, I place into your hands

Father, I place into your hands
The things I cannot do,
Father, I place into your hands
The things that I've been through.
Father, I place into your hands
The way that I should go,
For I know I always can trust you.

Father, I place into your hands
My friends and family.
Father, I place into your hands
The things that trouble me.
Father, I place into your hands
The person I would be,
For I know I always can trust you.

Father, we love to see your face,
We love to hear your voice.
Father, we love to sing your praise
And in your name rejoice.
Father, we love to walk with you
And in your presence rest,
For we know we always can trust you.

Father, I want to be with you
And do the things you do.
Father, I want to speak the words
That you are speaking too.
Father, I want to love the ones
That you will draw to you,
For I know that I am one with you.

Prayers of intercession:

Loving God,

We are travelling along together with you and we are thankful. We know that the journey will not always be easy for us and that we will often forget that you are there, carrying us at the times of most need.

Lord there are many for whom this journey is extra hard at this time and we pray that they will know they are lifted up by you.

We bring before you all those who are ill, some with Covid-19, others maybe not knowing what is wrong and worried to go to hospital at this moment. May they feel lifted by you.

We bring before you all those keyworkers who are putting their own safety at risk to care and tend for those who are ill. May they feel lifted by you.

We bring before you those whose journey is hard because they feel deserted, left all alone, those who are lonely, those who need routine, but that has been taken away. May they feel lifted by you.

We bring before you those who mourn loved ones and maybe they haven't been able to be close at this important time. May they feel lifted by you.

We bring before you those who have to manage this situation on a national and international level. We pray that they will make the right choices as they steer our lives forward. May they feel lifted by you.

Loving God, we pray that as we all journey through life we may know your presence. Let us not forget that Christ is risen! Hallelujah! Amen.

Jenny Hewer.

Hymn: Will you come and follow me?

Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown
in you and you in me?

Will you leave your self behind
if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
should your life attract or scare,
will you let me answer prayer
in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see
if I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free
and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean
and do such as this unseen,
and admit to what I mean
in you and you in me?

Will you love the 'you' you hide
if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around
through my sight and touch and sound
in you and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me

John Bell

May the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. Amen

Acknowledgments and Thanks:

Prayer of Praise: adapted from words by Nick Fawcett

Reflective Prayer: from Roots

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