

Second Sunday of Easter HC 3

Hymn worship the Lord is the beauty of holiness

Blessed be God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Blessed be God's kingdom, now and for ever.**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.
And also with you.

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. Matthew 22:37-40

Sentence

Jesus said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' John 20:27

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.

Prayer of the Day

Living God, for whom no door is closed, no heart is locked: draw us beyond our doubts, till we see your Christ and touch his wounds where they bleed in others.

This we ask through Christ our Saviour, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Acts 5.27-32

²⁷ The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. ²⁸ 'We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,' he said. 'Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood.'

²⁹ Peter and the other apostles replied: 'We must obey God rather than human beings! ³⁰ The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead – whom you killed by hanging him on a cross.

³¹ God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins.

³² We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.'

Psalms 118.14-29

¹⁴ The Lord is my strength and my song: and has become my salvation.

¹⁵ The sounds of joy and deliverance: are in the tents of the righteous.

¹⁶ The right hand of the Lord does mighty things: the right hand of the Lord raises up.

¹⁷ I shall not die but live: and proclaim the works of the Lord.

¹⁸ The Lord has disciplined me hard: but he has not given me over to death.

¹⁹ Open me the gates of righteousness: and I will enter and give thanks to the Lord.

²⁰ This is the gate of the Lord: the righteous shall enter it.

²¹ I will praise you, for you answered me: and have become my salvation.

²² The stone that the builders rejected: has become the head of the corner.

²³ This is the Lord's doing: and it is marvellous in our eyes.

²⁴ This is the day that the Lord has made: let us rejoice and be glad in it.

²⁵ O Lord, save us, we pray: O Lord, send us prosperity.

²⁶ Blessed is he who comes, in the name of the Lord: from the house of the Lord we bless you.

²⁷ The Lord is God, and he has given us light: guide the festal throng up to the horns of the altar.

²⁸ You are my God and I will praise you: you are my God, I will exalt you.

²⁹ O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good: and his mercy endures for ever.

Revelation 1.4-8

⁴ John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

⁷ 'Look, he is coming with the clouds,' and 'every eye will see him, even those who pierced him'; and all peoples on earth 'will mourn because of him.' So shall it be! Amen. ⁸ 'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.'

John 20.19-31

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'

²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.'

²² And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'

²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.'

²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'

²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.' ²⁸ Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!'

²⁹ Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.' ³⁰ Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Sermon

Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of the people

Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ has promised that you will hear us when we ask in faith: receive the prayers we offer. Loving God, in your mercy **hear our prayer**

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray,

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.

Confession

Christ the Son of God has been revealed as a light to the nations.

Let us bring our darkness to his light, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

Heavenly Father, you have loved us with an everlasting love, but we have broken your holy laws

and have left undone what we ought to have done. We are sorry for our sins and turn away from them.

For the sake of your Son who died for us, forgive us, cleanse us and change us.

By your Holy Spirit, enable us to live for you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God is slow to anger and full of compassion, forgiving all who humbly repent and trust in his Son as Saviour and Lord. God therefore forgives you in Christ Jesus, in whom there is no condemnation. **Amen.**

The peace

We are the body of Christ. **His Spirit is with us.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you.**

Hymn Glory be to Jesus

Offering

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have these gifts to share.

Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom. **Blessed be God for ever.**

Thanksgiving

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give our thanks and praise.

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, making us in your own image. We praise you for your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, who by his death on the cross and rising to new life offered the one true sacrifice for sin and obtained an eternal deliverance for his people.

Therefore, we lift our voices to praise you, saying,

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

And now, gracious God, we thank you for these gifts of bread and wine, and pray that we who receive them, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, according to our Saviour's word, in remembrance of his suffering and death, may share his body and blood.

On the night before he died, Jesus took bread, and when he had given you thanks he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat. This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper, he took the cup, and again giving you thanks he gave it to his disciples, saying,

'Drink from this, all of you.

This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

We eat this bread and drink this cup to proclaim the death of the Lord. We do this until he returns.

Come, Lord Jesus!

Father, as we recall his saving death and glorious resurrection, may we who share these gifts be renewed by your Holy Spirit and united in the body of your Son. Bring us with all your people into the joy of your eternal kingdom, there to feast at your table and join in your eternal praise:

Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive praise and honour and glory and power

We who are many are one body, for we all share in the one bread. The gifts of God for the people of God.

Come let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in remembrance that he died for us, and feed on him in our hearts with thanksgiving.

The body of Christ keep you in eternal life. Amen

The blood of Christ keep you in eternal life. Amen

Prayer after Communion

Eternal God, giver of life, in the breaking of the bread we know the risen Lord.

May we who celebrate this holy feast walk in his risen light and bring new life to all creation.

Father, **we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

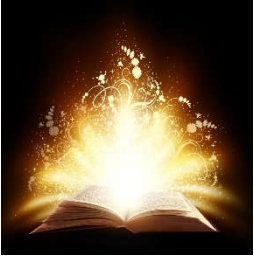
Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.

Hymn King of glory King of peace.

Blessing

Almighty God, who redeemed us through the resurrection of Christ, and has brought us out of slavery into everlasting freedom, give you joy and peace in faith and bring you to your eternal inheritance; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: **in the name of Christ. Amen.**



God's story is our story. We have been blessed with the Bible, God's story of his interaction with his beloved creation. The stories we read in the gospels are our story.

The disciples in our gospel reading today are hiding. They are hiding from fear of the Jews. Are they hiding from God like Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden? Perhaps they are, in a way. What was the last thing they did before the arrest of Jesus? They fled and denied knowing Christ, even though each of them had said they would be willing to die for Jesus. They are still not willing to die for Jesus. They are hiding and they are terrified.



They know Jesus is dead. They know that his body has gone from the tomb, but they have no understanding about what this might mean. I think they believe what Mary first tells them, that the body has been taken away and they don't know where they have put him.

Mary has since told them that she has seen the Lord, but this just makes no sense to them. It is into this context that the Risen Christ appears to the disciples. What is the first thing Jesus says to the disciples? Does he say, 'Where were you?' or 'You abandoned me?' No. He says, astonishingly, 'peace be with you'.

Then John gives us what I think must be one of the greatest understatements



in scripture, he writes: 'then they were glad when they saw the Lord'. Of course, there is the absolute delight in seeing Jesus risen from the dead, but I think the rejoicing happens partly because in saying 'peace be with you' Jesus is saying 'I forgive you, you thought you were no

longer my friends, but you are still my friends and I say peace be with you'. He says 'peace be with you' again.

Then he does something else astonishing, he says 'I send you'. This is a group of frightened men hiding in a locked room who don't even understand what has happened to Jesus. In that state, he tells them that he is sending them. There is no sense that they need to pass a test first before they get sent out: they're ready now. Jesus says, 'as the father has sent me so I send you'.



Then we get another echo from Genesis, Jesus does something weird. He breathes on them. Has anyone

breathed on you? If they have, I'm sure you don't remember it as a pleasant experience.

How does God bring Adam to life when he is created from clay? He breathes on him. Only the Creator God can give life to something that is dead.

In a sense, the disciples in that locked room are dead and lifeless, they are dead in their denial of Jesus, their sins, in the way they have let God down. Jesus breathes on them and says, 'receive the Holy Spirit'.

In both Greek and Hebrew, the word for God's spirit can also mean breath or wind. The Hebrew word for spirit is 'Ruach' - it even sounds like a breath as you say it.



So, Jesus, the one who until very recently was dead, breathes life, the Holy Spirit back into the weak disciples. As Paul writes in the letter to the Ephesians 'even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead' (Eph 2:5). In receiving this forgiving power of the Holy Spirit, the disciples are then to do the same, to forgive others in that power.

Jesus knows exactly what we need. He knew what the disciples needed to hear and see and touch. In this first appearance in the locked room, he shows the disciples his hands and his side, to show them he is not a ghost but real and can be touched.

Tomics



Thomas isn't there and so he is afraid that the disciples have just been seeing things, that they've had a hallucination. He makes the perfectly reasonable statement that he wants to touch Jesus in the very spot where the nails went in. He must be sure it's the same Jesus: that he's not a ghost and neither is he just a man that looks like Jesus.

Jesus, when he appears to them all again it is again in a closed room (interestingly not locked, but still closed, there is still some doubt there) and again, the first thing he says to them is 'peace be with you'.

In doing this he is saying 'I meant it you know, I really do forgive you, you really are still my friends, peace be with you'. Then he immediately knows what Thomas needs and offers him the chance to touch the place where the nails were in his hands and feel where the lance pierced his side. Jesus is happy to show him how real he is.



This is enough for Thomas, we don't even know if he takes Jesus up on the offer to put his finger in his wounds, he

simply makes the first full profession of faith in the divinity of Christ in the Gospel and says, 'my Lord and my God'. Jesus knows what we need. He knows we need something tangible to let us know that God is real. Something we can touch.



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So, he gave us Holy Communion. A reminder each week that Jesus is real. We can touch and taste and receive him in the bread and the wine. Just when you were worried that God felt like an imaginary friend, we are reminded, week by week that he is real.

Jesus speaks directly to us at the end of this encounter. If this were a movie rather than a book, this would be the part where Jesus' head turns from Thomas and looks directly at us down the camera lens and says 'blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe'. That is you. That is me.

Jesus steps out of this story we are reading directly into our lives. His story is our story. Our story is his story. He comes to us in our fearful, dead,



inadequate, failing state and says 'peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you, Receive the Holy Spirit, you are blessed because you believe in me.'

Do you feel afraid? Jesus says 'peace be with you'

Do you feel you've let God down? Jesus says 'peace be

with you'

Do you hear God calling you? Jesus says 'I am sending you'

Do you feel empty or inadequate? Jesus says 'receive the Holy Spirit'

Have you been shutting God out of your life? Jesus says 'peace be with you'

Do you want to know that Jesus is real? Jesus says 'touch, taste and receive me in the bread and the wine'

Do you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God? Jesus says 'blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe'.

Amen.