

Dear Beloved

This Sunday our wonderful friends from the Salvation Army: Sandra Mortimer and Tony Barford, are leading our services and preaching at Cooma and Adaminaby. I am very grateful as it means I didn't have to write a sermon this week.

This week our gospel reading continues straight on from the Resurrection with Jesus' appearance to some of the disciples then again a week later. What a reminder that Jesus, though he is our Glorious Lord, cares for each of us.



Blessings
Wendy

16 April 2023

The Holy Communion - THIRD ORDER

HYMN I cannot tell

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

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, Mark 12.30–31

Sentence

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. 1 Peter 1.3

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.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty and eternal God, the strength of those who believe and the hope of those who doubt: may we, who have not seen, have faith and receive the fullness of Christ's blessing; who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Acts 2.14, 22–32

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: 'Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ²² 'Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³ This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. ²⁵ David said about him: "'I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. ²⁶ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope, ²⁷ because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay. ²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.'" ²⁹ 'Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰ But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. ³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it.

Psalm 16

¹ Preserve me, O God: for in you have I taken refuge.

² I have said to the Lord, You are my lord: and all my good depends on you.

³ As for those who are held holy on the earth: the other gods in whom people delight,

⁴ Though the idols are many that they run after: their offerings of blood I will not offer,
nor take their name upon my lips.

⁵ The Lord is my appointed portion and my cup: you hold my lot in your hands.

⁶ The share that has fallen to me is in pleasant places: and a fair land is my possession.

⁷ I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel: at night also he has instructed my heart.

⁸ I have set the Lord always before me: he is at my right hand, and I shall not fall.

⁹ Therefore my heart is glad and my spirit rejoices: my flesh also shall rest secure.

¹⁰ For you will not give me over to the power of death: nor suffer your faithful one to see the Pit.

¹¹ You will show me the path of life: in your presence is the fulness of joy, and from your right hand flow delights for evermore.

1 Peter 1.1–12

¹ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, exiles, scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, ² who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance. ³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. ¹⁰ Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, ¹¹ trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

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.

The Sermon

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

THE 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.

Response: God of all 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 for ever. Amen.**

CONFESSION

Compassion and forgiveness belong to the Lord our God, though we have rebelled and wandered far off. Let us then ask for mercy, 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 GREETING OF 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 O love that will not let me go

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.**

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.** 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.**

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 for ever and ever. Amen.

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

God of mercy, may we who have shared in this holy meal know your forgiveness in our lives, bring your reconciliation to others, and be a sign of your wholeness in this broken world.

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. Amen.

Hymn I love You, Lord

Blessing: Christ our Saviour draw you to himself, that you may find in him crucified a sure ground for faith, a firm support for hope, and the assurance of sin forgiven and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

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

Sermon Notes 16 April 2023.

It is indeed an honour to worship with you all today.

Thank you St Pauls and St John's for your warm welcome to us and churches across the denominational spectrum.



With that said, I say Christos Anesti!' (response 'Alithos Anasti!').

We celebrate Christ's resurrection today with Christians from the Orthodox traditions.

In today's readings we also see reason for hope and encouragement reminding us what Faith really is.

The readings from John when considered with the beautiful Psalm 16, with script also repeated to the early Church in Acts 2 there can be three lessons,



1. Its ok to take on information differently, even in matters of faith – Thank God for Thomas and the way he used doubt to explore faith.

2. God knows what is behind our questions and knows how we are individually made

3. And most importantly - God's not going to let death or even doubt win out in your life, or in life of His followers the Church today.

One of the most liberating things I have learned in my Christian walk was to be comfortable with doubt.

Many heroes and heroines of our faith have said - Without doubt it is not faith –Or Doubt is the flip side of faith. If its knowledge, it's not faith, is it? Although that can get semantically tricky.

But first, isn't it good how we are not all the same?



. Thomas wasn't there the first Sunday- or start of the week after the Sabbath of Jesus' Death. He did join in the next gathering though.

In the tool I use for daily devotions- (and no I don't do it every day) Lectio and the 365 Prayer Movement, I read this week how the story of Thomas shows us that Jesus' love reached to those who don't make it along to the main events. To those who, for whatever reason, are not there for the big revelations and news. Could someone read out again from the Gospel of John Chapter 20 and verse 24 (Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came') Thank You

It's a lesson to us that we are not a people of 'being there at the right time' to be blessed and close to God. What a sane lesson this is for life for church life and our journey of faith.

'Not being there where Jesus appears' It's in the Bible, friends!

And when he did get along, he got the same treatment as others 'Peace be with You' not, 'Oh you made it!' How shocked I am to see you at Church! Which is what I may have said to him!



But even more- Thomas was addressed individually by Jesus when he turned up- to ask questions, by the way. And we have this doubting man who helped reveal to us that it is God's nature to come extra close (That's what blessing can mean) to those of us who have never seen any of these things.

That's the difference belief makes to God.

The idea that Thomas did reach out and touch Jesus' wound is debated. It's certainly vivid.

But we will not know if this more cautious man would have done it or not. But the artists certainly give a lot of life and flesh to it



2. Lectio sees Thomas as one on the outside, one not 'altogether' ready. Perhaps one processing his grief differently. The writers of the 365-Prayer Movement say it like this for a prayer point 'think of someone who is antagonistic towards Christ. I ask the Lord to show me any emotional pain there may be at their intellectual objections and ask Him to bring healing to their hearts'. Lectio (Pete Grieg).

Now this is not to conclude Thomas was antagonistic towards Christ. Maybe he had trouble taking for truth what his mates had told him, but maybe he felt ok to disagree with them too? That's a healthy community, isn't it?

It's unfortunate we have labelled him Doubting Thomas. If it's a term of scorn. But not so if it's a term of respect.

Remembering of course it had only been days since the whole calling and purpose of his life and the teacher he loved and relied on had been killed in a most public and shameful way.

He was still in raw grief.



3. 'You will not abandon me to the realm of the dead' claims the Psalmist and repeated by Paul to the early Church. These people were in grief- and Jesus came to say simply put in none but my terms 'I've dealt with death and grief'.

We are dealing with grief right now. Easter is here and we believe in resurrection and eternity, but we walk alongside the impact of death, in our own lives and marriages and families, for our plans.

Also, we deal with grief as a people of God in His church.

Are we dying off? Does God say we as a church are given over the power of death or modern doubts and cynicisms?



Could it be like this story - that just as these men met on a different day, behind locked doors because they had shown themselves to not be religiously correct by following Jesus. And they were joined by a doubter. Wonderful! They had a future they didn't even know about, didn't they?

Could we look at being church with different rhythms and practices to stay close to Jesus and feel His breath on our devotion as we seek out His presence in different ways? I'm excited by this example in the very first days after Jesus' resurrection. Excited to be reminded to only stay close to Jesus to keep Christianity alive in 2023.



Friends, Jesus wants to say "Peace Be with You" in all your questions and fears and doubt. His own words are kept for us in verse 29. And blessed is such a devalued word sometimes-

Think about it as 'You are in God's favour- You have God's grace on you!' 'We are God's favorites.'



'Because you have seen me you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe'.

Even those who don't turn up for everything and don't believe everything they are told! Shall we say it again in Greek?



Leader 'Christos Anasti!' Response 'Alithos Anasti!'.