

How Mission Community and KSAT Circuit Service for Sunday 18th April 2021

With thanks to David Askew

Psalm 103

¹ Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. ² Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits – ³ who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, ⁵ who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. ⁶ The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. ⁷ He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel: ⁸ the Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. ⁹ He will not always accuse, nor will he harbour his anger for ever; ¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; ¹² as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. ¹³ As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; ¹⁴ for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. ¹⁵ The life of mortals is like grass, they flourish like a flower of the field; ¹⁶ the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. ¹⁷ But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children – ¹⁸ with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts. ¹⁹ The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. ²⁰ Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. ²¹ Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will. ²² Praise the Lord, all his works everywhere in his dominion. Praise the Lord, my soul.

Hymn MP 1105 <https://youtu.be/6xM-fpXayUg>

See, what a morning, gloriously bright, with the dawning of hope in Jerusalem.
Folded the grave-clothes, tomb filled with light as the angels announce, "Christ is risen!"
See God's salvation plan, wrought in love, borne in pain, paid in sacrifice,
Fulfilled in Christ, the Man, for He lives, Christ is risen from the dead!

See Mary weeping, "Where is He laid?" as in sorrow, she turns from the empty tomb;
Hears a voice speaking, calling her name; it's the Master, the Lord raised to life again!
This voice that spans the years, speaking life, stirring hope, bringing peace to us,
Will sound 'til He appears, for He lives, Christ is risen from the dead!

One with the Father, Ancient of Days, through the Spirit, who clothes faith with certainty,
Honour and blessing, glory and praise to the King crowned with pow'r and authority!
And we are raised with Him, death is dead, love has won, Christ has conquered;
And we shall reign with Him, for He lives, Christ is risen from the dead!

Prayer

Loving heavenly Father, we are glad to worship You today. We come together from a variety of backgrounds with different demands upon our time. As we meet together we know that You will be with us and we thank You for that promise. We give You our praise, You are a great and wonderful God, majestic in holiness, awesome in power, boundless in love. We thank You that Your grace, shown to us in Jesus, reaches down to us, and that we are called Your children. In the light of Your holiness, we become aware of our sin. We ask that you will forgive us, and we are grateful that Your grace still extends to us to make us clean again. We thank You for Your generosity shown to us in so many ways, and the beauty that we see all around us. May we in this act of worship draw near to You, may we hear Your voice, and may we bless our Christian brothers and sisters, who we know will also be joining with us in this act of worship. So, we bring our prayers to You in Jesus' name. Amen.

Meditation based on Psalm 103

Thank you for Your patience, Lord, for Your understanding of my doubts, my errors and my weaknesses. Thank You for coming to me, not in a blinding flash of retribution, but in love. It's good to know that I'm in Your hands.

I don't understand it fully, Lord – Oh! let me be honest, I don't understand it at all – Your patience. 'A thousand years in Your sight.....'. Yes, I know You're not limited to time, like me, and yet..... yet - am I limited to time? Haven't You invited me to share in your kingdom? Haven't You planted eternity in my heart? Lord, maybe that's where Your patience comes from. From the knowledge that you have time. All the time in the world. And beyond. But more, Your patience comes from love. The willingness to pick me up, and start again every time I fall.

It makes me think, Lord, if You have all this patience with me, shouldn't I have patience too? With myself – not just to indulge myself, not to gloss over the person I am, but to do what You do – pick up the pieces of my life and start again. Without resentment, without building up that anger against myself which leaves me exhausted, and helpless, and full of guilt. Knowing that time is in Your hands, and so am I. To accept myself as You accept me. Knowing all my faults, but seeing with the eyes of love and forgiveness. And knowing that You do that for me, help me to do it, not only for myself, but for others.

Hymn MP 477 <https://youtu.be/ls01XGV7oA0>

My peace I give unto you; it's a peace that the world cannot give;
It's a peace that the world cannot understand, peace to know, peace to live,
My peace I give unto you.

My love I give unto you, it's a love that the world cannot give;
It's a love that the world cannot understand, love to know, love to live,
My love I give unto you.
It's a love that the world cannot understand. My love I give unto you.

Reading Luke 24 vs 36-49

Jesus appears to the disciples

³⁶ While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'

³⁷ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. ³⁸ He said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.'

⁴⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹ And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, 'Do you have anything here to eat?' ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate it in their presence.

⁴⁴ He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.'

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, 'This is what is written: the Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'

Hymn MP 444 https://youtu.be/oQK_7CNI2QY

Lord, speak to me, that I may speak in living echoes of Thy tone;
As Thou has sought, so let me seek Thy erring children, lost and lone.

Oh, strengthen me, that while I stand firm on the rock, and strong in Thee,
I may stretch out a loving hand to wrestlers with the troubled sea.

Oh teach me, Lord, that I may teach the precious things Thou dost impart
And wing my words that they may reach the hidden depths of many a heart.

Oh, give Thine own sweet rest to me, that I may speak with soothing power
A word in season, as from Thee, to weary ones in needful hour.

Oh, fill me with Thy fullness, Lord, until my very heart o'erflow
In kindling thought and glowing word, Thy love to tell, Thy praise to show.

Oh, use me Lord, use even me, just as Thou wilt and when and where,
Until Thy blessed face I see, Thy rest, Thy joy, Thy glory share.

Thoughts

As I write these words, we are enjoying a lovely spring day. It has been a cold frosty morning, but I am confident that as the day progresses and the sun gets higher it will become quite warm. I think there is something to enjoy in all the seasons. The long warm or hot summer days, the colours of autumn, the starkness of winter, with long dark evenings – a hot fire. But the one I think I appreciate most is the spring, with the signs of new life all around. As I travel the country lanes on my bike I notice the hedgerow flowers, the fields turning green and the lambs in the fields. How appropriate that this is also the time when we celebrate Easter and the message of new life after death. I wonder how you celebrate this most meaningful of all the Christian festivals? I know that during Lent we try to prepare our hearts for Easter. On Good Friday we quietly contemplate what happened all those years ago when Jesus died for us. On Easter Sunday we would normally meet with other believers and celebrate with Christians right across the world the victory and hope that the resurrection brings.

I wonder what it was like in Jerusalem on those days leading up to the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus, and immediately afterwards. It would certainly cause quite a stir, and would be the main topic of conversation – that Jesus the prophet, teacher and miracle worker from Nazareth had been arrested, put on trial and been crucified by the Romans. He had made an amazing impact on the lives of so many people, preached about God's love, but for some reason the religious leaders hated Him – regarded Him as a threat and wanted rid of Him.

If they had something like a local newspaper in Jerusalem, I'm sure there would be headlines like 'Local Prophet and Teacher arrested and crucified'. In the midst of all this there were the disciples, no doubt feeling threatened, vulnerable and confused. It seemed that their hopes had been dashed and the bottom had dropped out of their world.

But now there were rumours circulating. Two women had gone to Jesus' tomb and found His body missing. Two disciples, Peter and John, had also gone to the tomb, and while they saw strips of burial cloth, there was no body. More amazingly, Jesus Himself had appeared to Mary and later to the rest of His disciples. Could it be true that Jesus had, in fact, risen from the dead, as He previously had claimed He would? This new rumour would spread like wildfire around Jerusalem and the surrounding area. It wouldn't be long until the authorities and Pharisees would hear about it. What would they do?

We read before from Luke 24 vs 36-49. The disciples were meeting together, probably behind closed doors, talking about all that was going on and the reports of encounters that some of them had had with Jesus. Suddenly, Jesus appeared and stood among them and said 'Peace be with

you'. Understandably they were startled and frightened, thinking He was a ghost. He tries to reassure them that it is really Him. 'Touch me' He says 'see the wounds in my hands and side. I am real'. (vs 40-43) Jesus wanted to reassure His disciples. He wanted them to be absolutely certain that it was Him. That the resurrection was real, and went to great lengths to prove it.

We have numerous records in the gospels of incidents when Jesus appeared to the disciples. Two disciples on the road to Emmaus, He had a meal next to Lake Galilee with a group who had gone fishing.

St Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15vs 3-8 that Jesus appeared to the twelve and then to more than 500 believers at the same time, and also to James and the apostles. Jesus didn't want to leave any doubts about the validity of His resurrection, because He knew what a difference it would make in the lives of those early Christians. He wanted them to remember Him as the risen Saviour, not as a dead hero.

The disciples had been traumatised, and were fearful after all that had happened. So, the first thing that Jesus wants to give them is reassurance. 'Look' He says (vs44-47), 'everything that is written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms had to be fulfilled'. What had happened to Him over the last few days was all part of the plan and purpose of God. When Jesus was crucified, it wasn't something that happened to Him against His will, but something He was willing to do for the salvation of the world. See John 10 vs 17-18. He then goes on to show them from the scriptures how He had to suffer, but that He would rise from the dead, and how repentance and forgiveness would be preached in His name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem (Luke 24 vs 45-47).

There are times in all of our lives when, like those disciples, we need reassurance. We live in difficult days with all that has been going on in the world, especially over the last 15 months. We also live in times when some of the things we hold dear, and values that we treasure are being threatened. It is in these times when our faith makes such a difference, especially when we know that the God and Saviour we worship is very much alive, and is always there for us, no matter what. We also take confidence in the knowledge that, despite all that is wrong in the world, God is still at work, and His purpose will prevail. He will have the last word.

When Jesus met with His disciples after the resurrection, He also gave them a commission. In Luke 24 v 48 He says 'You are witnesses of these things.' We have the Great Commission at the end of Matthew's gospel. We also read in Mark 16 v 15 'Go into all the world and preach the Good News to all creation.' Jesus was about to leave this world and go back to His Father. He had spent three years working among the people, demonstrating and teaching about the Kingdom of God. Now He is handing over that responsibility to the disciples. We thank God that they did not fail. If we read through the early chapters of the book of Acts, we see that the apostles were fearless in their preaching. The thrust of their message was very much that Jesus was alive and at work in the world. The fact that the Church is still very much alive today is testimony to their faithfulness.

We have thought about how Jesus gave reassurance to the disciples. We see that He gave them a commission to be His witnesses. We also see in v 49 the resources that He promises. He says 'I am going to send you what the Father has promised'. He was referring, of course, to the Holy Spirit, whom He would send to them on the Day of Pentecost. This is what happened to them. Jesus says in Acts 1 v 8 'You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you'. It was a combination of the confidence that Jesus was alive and the 'dynamic' power of the Holy Spirit that motivated and powered them to be so effective in their witness.

As Christians living in the 21st century we also have the responsibility of carrying on the commission that Jesus gave to those first disciples. We live in a very different world to what it was like in the first century. There are new challenges for us. We have to find new ways of being Christ's witnesses. But the message that we have the privilege and responsibility to share is still the same. It is the message that Jesus is alive. It is about God's love, and that forgiveness and reconciliation are available to all who put their faith in Jesus and are willing to repent. It is about a living hope that goes far beyond anything that this world has to offer. Like those first disciples, we find this a daunting responsibility. But we take confidence in the promise that Jesus will be with us, and the same Holy Spirit who empowered those first disciples is available for us too.

May we know His grace and power in our lives today.

Prayers of intercession

Let us pray for those for whom today is just another day, who do not acknowledge You, and have not come into the joy of knowing the risen Christ. May we find ways to reach out to them with Your grace.

We pray for all who live in countries that are torn apart by war and unrest, that they may find peace. For those who have no home or security, may they find a place of welcome.

We pray for all who are in need throughout the world, those who go hungry, who don't have access to clean water, who don't have access to proper health care. May we be part of a concerted effort to do something about it.

We pray about the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic, for leaders to have wisdom in decision making. For those who have lost family or friends, to know consolation and peace. For the success of the vaccine programme, for a sustained recovery.

We pray for all who are sick in the community..... and for those who are anxious about loved ones.

We pray for families that grieve, for comfort and reassurance.

We pray at this time for the Royal Family, who have been going through a difficult time recently.

We think of them as they grieve for the loss of Prince Philip, that you will comfort them. We thank you for our Queen, and her Christian faith, and pray that this will live on through her family.

We pray for each other and ourselves, that we may have wholeness, peace and hope through the presence of the risen Lord in our lives.

Lord's Prayer

Hymn MP 835 <https://youtu.be/WQ8qe3CggWo>

Great is the darkness that covers the earth, oppression, injustice and pain.
Nations are slipping In hopeless despair, though many have come in Your name.
Watching while sanity dies, touched by the madness and lies.

*Come Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus, pour out Your spirit we pray.
Come Lord Jesus, come Lord Jesus, pour out Your spirit on us today.*

May now Your church rise with power and love, this glorious gospel proclaim.
In every nation salvation will come to those who believe in Your name.
Help us bring light to this world that we might speed Your return.

Come Lord Jesus.....

Great celebrations on that final day, when out of the heavens You come.
Darkness will vanish all sorrow will end, and rulers will bow at Your throne.
Our great commission complete, then face to face we shall meet.

Come Lord Jesus.....

Blessing

May God's blessing surround you each day,
As you trust Him and walk in His way.
May His presence within guard and keep you from sin.
Go in peace, go in joy, go in love.

