

WINCHESTER, EASTLEIGH & ROMSEY CIRCUIT

Service at Home Sunday 23rd April 2023

Easter 3

prepared by the Revd Peter Rayson

As you prepare to come before God in worship,
read Psalm 119:1-16 (StF 829)

We continue in prayer:

Almighty God and Father,
as I come into your presence today
help me to be joyful that you invite me into that
presence;
help me to be joyful that you know and love me
as I am;
help me to be joyful that through the death and
resurrection of Jesus Christ,
I am restored to who you made me to be.
I ask this in and through the name of our Lord
and Saviour, Jesus Christ
and in the power of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

Read, listen or sing along to "Sing hosanna"
(StF 76)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yno7LNhiL_E

Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising,
give me joy in my heart, I pray;
give me joy in my heart, keep me praising,
keep me praising till the break of day:

Sing hosanna! Sing hosanna!
Sing hosanna to the King of kings!
Sing hosanna! Sing hosanna!
Sing hosanna to the King!

Give me peace in my heart, keep me loving,
give me peace in my heart, I pray;
give me peace in my heart, keep me loving,
keep me loving till the break of day:

Give me love in my heart, keep me serving,
give me love in my heart, I pray;
give me love in my heart, keep me serving,
keep me serving till the break of day:

Anonymous

adapted by A Servison and others

Read from Luke's Gospel Chapter 24, v 13-35
(NRSVA)

¹³Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' ¹⁹He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.' ²⁵Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he was at the table

with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.³² They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?'³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together.³⁴ They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!'³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread."

Reflection

Quite often I find myself looking for something but am unable to find it. Yet when I ask for help, it turns out to be exactly where I was looking. Why could I not find it? Is it perhaps because I was assuming that it was lost and would never be found? Is it because I am looking in despair when I should be looking in hope?

I wonder what Cleopas and his friend thought of this stranger who joined them on their journey? He had been in Jerusalem yet seemed unaware of what had been happening right under his nose! I can't help but think that Jesus must have enjoyed the irony.

These travellers were looking for something - but what they were looking for was not a thing or even a person. They were looking for understanding; an understanding of what they had actually witnessed in Jerusalem and of which their travelling companion was apparently unaware. The answer may not have been under their nose but it was walking alongside them!

As they journeyed along with Jesus, gradually the truth was being revealed to them even though they did not realise it. But what mattered was not their ignorance but their desire to understand the truth of Jesus Christ. It was their desire, their faith, to which Jesus was responding. Jesus did not impose himself upon them but responded to their search for

understanding. This is the pattern of salvation. It is a gift. It is not forced upon us but offered to us in response to our realisation that it is what we need. Had Cleopas and his companion dismissed the events of the previous week from their minds as something which was of no relevance to them, then Jesus would not have joined with them as they travelled.

But when Jesus did join with them, he did not suddenly appear before them and reveal himself, "in a flash of glory" because, while that might have made them believe, it would not have helped them understand. They needed the knowledge of the Messiah, not just to believe in him. Faith and knowledge are themselves travelling companions, each revealing the other as the journey progresses. If they are separated, one can begin to assume that it has no need of the other but this is a dangerous path to tread. Blind faith and blind knowledge can equally lead us into dangerous territory where one is seen as the enemy of the other; something which must be suppressed at all costs. Yet if we are journeying on the right path, our knowledge informs our faith and our faith informs our knowledge.

If we seek to know and understand Jesus, then he will reveal himself to us too. We may not understand when or how, we may well not even realise at the time he is doing so. Rather we will later come to realise what has been revealed to us as we journeyed with him alongside us.

Now you might challenge me by asking, "Didn't Jesus say that we had to become like children? Isn't a simple child-like faith what we are actually called to have?" I would argue about the implication of the word *simple* but otherwise I agree, we are called to a child-like faith in God through Jesus. But as my grandson is repeatedly reminding me, the way most children respond to being told something new, is to ask, "But why?" The correct answer to the question, "But why?" depends on the maturity of the questioner. Why do we have day and night? The image of a rotating ball with a light shining on it is usually enough at first but, if the child is inclined that way, will move on to Newton's

laws of motion and then Einstein's laws of relativity. A child's understanding of faith should be allowed to develop in just the same way as their understanding of physics; seeking to know and understand more of about our relationship with God should be a part of our normal development. Of course, this increase of knowledge and understanding doesn't change God any more than Einstein changed the physical universe but that does not diminish either.

I am not suggesting that to be a follower of Jesus we all need to become academic theologians, any more than I am suggesting that we should all become quantum physicists. But when we choose to follow Christ, we are called to become holy; that is, we are called to become like God. Now while we cannot possibly become fully like God, if we are serious in our faith, serious in seeking to become holy, we must seek to understand something about the nature of God. For some that will be through a life-long journey of academic study, for others it might be through prayer and meditation, for some it will be in seeking to live a Christ-like sacrificial life and for many it will be some combination of all these and more. It does not matter how far along the path our journey takes us. What matters is that we choose to be on the right path, seeking the right destination. If we do this then Christ will be there journeying alongside us, guiding and teaching us as we travel on.

Read, listen or sing along to "Knowing you" (StF 489),

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTTISx6zXio>

All I once held dear, built my life upon,
all this world reveres, and wars to own,
all I once thought gain I have counted loss;
spent and worthless now, compared to this.

*Knowing you, Jesus, knowing you,
there is no greater thing.
You're my all, you're the best,
you're my joy, my righteousness,
and I love you, Lord.*

Now my heart's desire is to know you more,
to be found in you and known as yours.
To possess by faith what I could not earn,
all-surpassing gift of righteousness.

Oh, to know the power of your risen life,
and to know you in your sufferings.
To become like you in your death, my Lord,
so with you to live and never die.

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

A prayer for all people:

Lord God, I pray for myself and for all people of the world, that we may have the courage and the hope to seek to become more like Jesus; to become transformed into the people you created us to be and so to transform your world into the place you created it to be when all people live for the good of one another and for the praise of your name.

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 for ever. Amen

As you continue with your day and the journey
of your life, a traditional Irish blessing:

May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face;
the rains fall soft upon your fields
and until we meet again, may God hold you in
the palm of His hand. Amen.
