

Sunday 11th April 2021 – Kath Brydon

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Call to Worship

Come with joy to meet our risen Lord Jesus. Come with all creation to praise and glorify His blessed name.

Hymn: God is here, as we his people (STF 25)

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here:

<https://youtu.be/QbkNXq71iis?t=4>

God is here! As we his people
meet to offer praise and prayer,
may we find in fuller measure
what it is in Christ we share.
Here, as in the world around us,
all our varied skills and arts
wait the coming of the Spirit
into open minds and hearts.

Here are symbols to remind us
of our lifelong need of grace;
here are table, font, and pulpit;
here the cross has central place.
Here in honesty of preaching,
here in silence, as in speech,
here, in newness and renewal,
God the Spirit comes to each.

Here our children find a welcome
in the Shepherd's flock and fold,

here as bread and wine are taken,
Christ sustains us, as of old.

Here the servants of the Servant
seek in worship to explore
what it means in daily living
to believe and to adore.

Lord of all, of Church and Kingdom,
in an age of change and doubt,
keep us faithful to the gospel,
help us work your purpose out.
Here, in this day's dedication,
all we have to give, receive:
we, who cannot live without you,
we adore you! We believe!

Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)

Let us pray together:

Gracious God, we praise and adore you.
For the gift of creation, seen all around us
in the beauty of springtime. For flowers,
trees in bloom, for new life emerging and
warm sunny days. Help us to be stewards
of your creation and to help reverse the
damage we have done to your beautiful
world.

We thank you for the awesome gift of
your Son, Jesus, who humbly walked this
earth in fully human form and who died to

save us. We praise you for His resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit who walks alongside us and guides and sustains us through our every waking hour. We pray through the name of Jesus. Amen.

Today's Reading from the Old Testament

Psalm 133

The Blessedness of Unity

A Song of Ascents.

How very good and pleasant it is
when kindred live together in unity!

It is like the precious oil on the head,
running down upon the beard,
on the beard of Aaron,
running down over the collar of his
robes.

It is like the dew of Hermon,
which falls on the mountains of Zion.
For there the Lord ordained his blessing,
life for evermore.

Today's Gospel Reading: John 20: 19-31

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

Jesus and Thomas

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he 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.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

The Purpose of This Book

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Time to Reflect

Poor Thomas, famously known as 'doubting Thomas' from the passage in John's gospel. It somehow seems a flaw in his character. However, when we remember the events leading up to the crucifixion, Peter denied Jesus and all the disciples deserted him, as Jesus had predicted they would.

In the passage, the disciples were gathered behind locked doors, they were still very afraid of repercussions from the Jewish authorities. It's also fair to assume at this moment they didn't know what would happen next, despite the fact that Jesus had told them about his impending death and resurrection.

Another thing we aren't told, (in this gospel, but see Luke 24:11), was whether the disciples believed Mary Magdalene, the first person to see the risen Christ.

Doubt is a very human emotion, we all experience it in our lives, we doubt that we can do things, often feel doubt when we think God is asking us something which takes us out of our comfort zone.

At the time of writing this, we are awaiting an announcement which will describe the road map out of our third lockdown. Our churches are not open, worship is online or in paper form. We have had to do things which take us out of our comfort zones and many times I have had doubt over whether I am able to achieve whatever it is I am asked to do. I have found recording a message on a screen difficult, often having 7 or 8 attempts before being happy with the result.

Doubt need not always be seen as a negative emotion though, because doubt leads to questions, and ultimately to answers to those questions. Thomas doubted that the other disciples had seen Jesus, but when he finally saw Jesus, he didn't need to touch Jesus to know, he called him "My Lord and my God", he recognised who Jesus really was – God.

Jesus told the disciples that those who believe without seeing are blessed. For some of us it might happen in a short time, while for others it might take years of questioning and having those questions answered. When we reach the point of belief we can and will, with assurance recognise and call Jesus "My Lord and my God".

Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

We pray for our world, for countries ravaged by war and natural disasters. We pray for those countries struggling with Covid who have little or no vaccines.

We pray for our country, for those making decisions, give them wisdom and courage to act wisely. We pray for those who are on the frontline, who are exhausted from the effects of the pandemic, give them rest.

We pray for the bereaved, especially those who haven't been able to grieve with or for loved ones. We pray for those still struggling with illness and weariness. We think of those who are anxious and afraid to go out, those who have been isolated for so long and those who are lonely.

We pray for our churches, some open, some still worshipping in other ways, help us to go forward in the way you lead us, not to just return to what we have always done.

We pray for ourselves, that we don't need a sign to believe in you, that we trust you to supply everything we need in our lives.

Through our risen, redeeming Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: Listen to

**<https://youtu.be/J7JdhbQ33r0?t=13> or
sing a verse of a hymn that comes to
mind**

A prayer of blessing

Peace be with you, dear brothers and sisters, and may God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you love with faithfulness. May God's grace be eternally upon all who love our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen (Ephesians 6: 23-24)

*All Hymns reproduced under CCLi 1144191.
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