

Sunday 7 April 2024

Low Sunday

(the Second Sunday of Easter)



St Peulan's Church, Anglesey

Award Photography

Sermon © Pete Haslam.

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The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

The hymn can be accessed via a YouTube link. Please click on the links.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,

<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 [This joyful Eastertide](#)

(click on this link to hear the hymn)

The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

All He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

The Preparation

**All 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.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,

with all your soul, with all your mind,

and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed for us.

Let us therefore rejoice by putting away all malice and evil

and confess our sins in penitence and faith,

firmly resolved to keep God’s commandments

and to live in love and peace with all.

All Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Gloria

All Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

The Collect for the Second Sunday of Easter

Almighty Father,
you have given your only Son to die for our sins
and to rise again for our justification:
grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness
that we may always serve you
in pureness of living and truth;
through the merits of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

The whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

Acts 4:32-35

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from the First Letter of St John

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us—we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

1 John 1:1—2:2

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 [Led like a lamb to the slaughter](#) (click on this link to hear the hymn)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

All Glory to you O Lord.

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.'

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.'

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.

John 20:19-end

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

Easter announces the resurrection of Jesus and promises other resurrections as well. Today let us hear of the victory of Jesus, but also of those other resurrections.

The Gospel stories about Jesus after his resurrection reveal a few things about what it means for him to be alive again and his body to be glorified. Sometimes people recognise him immediately, and sometimes they do not. He enters a room even when the door is locked. The wounds of crucifixion remain visible in his hands and feet and side. He hears and speaks, he consumes food, and on one occasion he even fixes breakfast for his disciples. The resurrection stories reveal to us a few things about how Jesus remains the same and yet, somehow, he is different as a result of having been killed and brought back to life. But it seems to me that these resurrection stories are more concerned with what happens to the disciples: how they remain the same and how they are different as a result of encountering Jesus raised from the dead. Today's Gospel is a case in point.

The story begins on the evening of Easter Day. Fear has overcome the disciples. The blood has drained from their faces. Their leader has been put to death by the authorities and hastily buried, and they fear that they will be next. So they hide in

a locked room with the curtains drawn, listening carefully to every sound in the street below. They regard themselves as dead men. And what happens? A dead man come back to life appears among them, a man they know well. This is the same Jesus whose crucifixion took place two days before. They weren't much help to him then. One of their number, now gone, turned traitor, and arranged for his capture. All but the youngest fled when the going got rough. The senior one among them followed at a distance, but when questioned by a servant girl denied he had ever heard of Jesus. These so-called disciples showed themselves to be washouts. Now Jesus is back. They have failed him, and it's time they paid the price.

His appearance in that locked room startles them intensely. He tells them, 'Peace be with you.' He does not condemn them, or even rebuke them. Instead, he dissolves their fear. He heals their grief. 'Peace be to you.' He does not ignore the past, but graciously moves beyond it. The disciples are forgiven for their failure. And this forgiveness sets their distraught hearts at rest.

And the fact that is his gift of peace. It is a peace that makes action possible, and so Jesus issues a command: 'As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.' As the disciples have received, so they are to give to others. They are to spread the gift of peace to any who are trapped, as they once were, in failure and grief and fear. Christ who forgives them sends them out so that to others they can be the Christ who forgives. He exhales a great, warm breath into their faces, and in this way bestows a new source of life, the Holy Spirit, who will be as necessary to them as the air they breathe. Thus they are empowered to extend the dominion of forgiveness in which they have been included. These clustered disciples remain in many ways the same. But in important ways they are different from what they were before. Once they were failures. Now they have passed beyond the point where failure and success have meaning. Once they were overcome by fear. Now they have encountered other realities that alone deserve their allegiance.

But this story has a sequel. Thomas was absent from the group when Jesus appeared, and later his wide-eyed buddies tell him what happened. Neither their excited words nor their changed lives are enough to convince him that what they say is true. He demands other proof, familiar evidence: the sight of Jesus' face alive again, the feel of his warm and wounded flesh. It is for this reason that he has been called Doubting Thomas. But give him some credit. His doubt is no detached, intellectual game; it engages the centre of who he is. Thomas doubts from the heart.

The final scene occurs a week after Easter Day, in other words, today. Jesus appears again in that closed room, uninvited. He says again, 'Peace be to you.' Then he addresses Thomas. Jesus does not rebuke him for his desertion during the long hours of the Passion, and not for his absence the previous Sunday night. Instead,

he helps resurrect Thomas from his own particular narrow grave of uncertainty and insistence that Thomas rises. In some ways he remains the same Thomas. Those acquainted with him still recognise his face. Yet the encounter with Jesus changes him. He goes from a heart full of doubt to a heart full of belief.

The refusal to believe without tangible proof that came so easily to his lips seven days before gives way to a bold confession of faith, as he blurts out: 'My Lord and my God!' Throughout the Gospel there appears no better statement of who Jesus is than these words from the one we would do well to call Thomas the Believer.

Thomas moves from being dominated by doubt to being set free by faith. This is his resurrection. So the disciples in that locked room leave behind a life of failure, guilt, and fear in order to enter a real life where they experience the deep peace of forgiveness and share that peace with others. This is their resurrection.

The New Testament tells us of still more who are raised up by the raising up of Jesus: people who remain themselves yet are somehow different. There are places in the story where Peter is prominent. He moves from being the arch-coward during the time of the Passion to the one whose restoration represents the restoration of every disciple. Peter, who denied Jesus in the face of a servant girl's flippancy, appears in today's reading from Acts as someone very different. To a turbulent crowd that could easily grab him and beat him, he does not hesitate to announce that Jesus lives despite their malice, and that Jesus offers them forgiveness and hope. Peter is still Peter: boisterous, emotional, and passionate. Yet he is different. This is his resurrection.

Paul is another raised up by the raising up of Christ. He is not simply lifted up from the dust of Damascus Road after being thrown by his horse. He is also lifted up from a persecutor's career to an apostle's ministry. The faith he once tried to destroy he is given a commission to propagate. The fire of hatred inside him gives way to the living flame of love. Paul is still Paul: intense, intellectual, zealous. Yet he is different. This is his resurrection.

We too are raised up by the raising up of Jesus. We remain our familiar selves, yet we become different. Because the worst part of ourselves hears the message of peace, the call to a new responsibility, and is restored to a true life. We then rise up, we rise up from our own particular narrow grave to join the company of those—Jesus and Thomas, Peter and Paul and the other disciples—who now live on the far side of death. Finally I would ask each of us to consider ourselves, to look inside, and to answer some questions. How am I being raised up by the raising up of Jesus? From what particular death am I being set free? What message of peace does the risen Jesus speak to me? What commission does he give me? What new life does

he impart that leaves me who I am yet different? Each of us will have our own answers to questions such as these.

Give some time to this reflection, and give thanks that Jesus is not alone in his resurrection, but that we too are raised with him from death to life. Amen.

The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
the source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

All This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

'Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe':
as we thank God for the gift of faith in the resurrection of his Son, and for the many blessings he has given us, let us bring before him all our needs.

We pray for the Church in its ministry of forgiveness,
that she may call everyone to repentance and to forgiveness and belief in him
whom they have not seen.

Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

Lord, in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

We pray for our world, suffering from war and conflict,
that Christ may breathe his healing power upon all peoples, that they may live
together, reconciled in peace and justice.

Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

Lord, in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

We pray for the sick and those who care for them,
may we show them our love and care,
and may the Lord answer our earnest prayers.

Lord, hear us. Lord, graciously hear us.

Lord, in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

The peace

Peace to you from God our heavenly Father.
Peace from his Son Jesus Christ who is our peace.
Peace from the Holy Spirit, the Life-giver.

The peace of the Lord be always with you:

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 Low in the grave he lay

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below:

The Dismissal

The peace of God which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God,
and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;
and the blessing
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
and the blessing of God the Almighty:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be with you now and remain with you always.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 Jesus Lives!

[\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ.

Amen.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

All He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

Father, you made the world and love your creation.
You gave your Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour.
His dying and rising have set us free from sin and death.
And so we gladly thank you,
with saints and angels praising you, and saying,

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink 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.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All 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.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us. Amen.

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

God of Life,
who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son
to the death of the cross,
and by his glorious resurrection
have delivered us from the power of our enemy:
grant us so to die daily to sin,
that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his risen life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen

All Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.