

Sunday 16 April 2023

Low Sunday

(the Second Sunday of Easter)



Sermon © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

Prayers of intercession and liturgy © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

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The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration are included 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 [See what a morning](#)

(please 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

This Gloria is sung to the tune of 'Cwm Rhondda'. Click [here](#) for the tune.

All Glory be to God in Heaven,
Songs of joy and peace we bring,
Thankful hearts and voices raising,
To creation's Lord we sing.
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,
Glory be to God our King:
Glory be to God our King.

Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,
Bore the load of this world's sin;
Only Son of God the Father,
You have brought us peace within.
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,
Now your glorious reign begin:
Now your glorious reign begin.

**You O Son of God are Holy,
You we praise with one accord.
None in heav'n or earth is like you,
Only you are Christ the Lord.
With the Father and the Spirit,
Ever worshipped and adored:
Ever worshipped and adored.**

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 Book of Acts

Peter stood with the eleven, raised his voice, and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.

'You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know—this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. For David says concerning him,

"I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken;
therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
moreover, my flesh will live in hope.
For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,

or let your Holy One experience corruption.
You have made known to me the ways of life;
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.”

‘Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying,

“He was not abandoned to Hades,
nor did his flesh experience corruption.”

This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.’ *Acts 2:14a, 22-32*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from First Letter of St Peter

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, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen^[a] him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 1:3-9

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 Three days

(please 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 20:19-31

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All **Praise to you O Christ.**

Sermon

I don't like sharing personal details but I'll make an exception for St Thomas. He was a twin and so am I. Let me explain what being a twin was (and still can be) like.

Being a twin is confusing. I cannot begin to count the number of times someone has spoken to me thinking I'm my brother; and he can say the same. This form of mistaken identity can make you feel as though you're not a complete person. You share an appearance and folk assume you share a personality, likes, dislikes fears, and so on. Part of the confusion is the way people argue with you, telling you what and who you are (when you're not) and telling you what you're like (because your twin is but you aren't).

Being a twin can be time consuming. Apart from the endless explaining, 'No, I'm not him, I'm ...' is the time spent trying to second guess the mistakes. In fact, by my teens, my brother and I felt compelled to adopt a dress code so that friends could avoid confusion. 'Look for the blue shirt!' we'd say, but no-one noticed. People say, 'Oh, it must have been fun playing tricks on people!' and thinking me a killjoy when I try to explain what it was (and still is) really like, as above.

And being a twin can feel shameful. Folk often thought they saw me when in fact they'd seen my brother. People told me secrets intended for him. We were accused of being insensitive for 'not remembering' after someone said something to the one intending the confidence for the other. We both lost many friends this way.

So when I read today's Gospel I don't see a *doubting* Thomas. Instead, I see someone who has probably suffered for being a twin and has had to learn from his awkward inheritance. Even now, two millennia later, he's blamed for doubting when in fact he's not so much doubting as seeking clarification. Let me explain.

Most of the disciples have assembled in the upper room when Jesus appears to them. Thomas arrives much later, after Jesus has gone, so they say to him, 'We've seen Jesus!' Thomas will have replied between gritted teeth, 'No, you saw someone who merely *looked* like Jesus. You have fallen into the classic mistake. I suffer the same problem every single day of my life. It was someone else!' He feels justified in this stance because he knows exactly what it feels like. He knows the cost of looking like someone else. He will have told the other disciples that they were mistaken: they were fooled and are foolish.

And don't forget that no-one in first-century Palestine wore glasses to correct their eyesight. Mistakes owing to visual similarities could have been endemic.

When viewing the passion narratives in this different light, we may see many more cases of blind action following an unquestioned belief:

- At Bethany a week before the first Palm Sunday, the disciples see a sex worker getting too close to their holy man Jesus and respond by shooing her away. By contrast, Jesus sees Mary Magdalene as a real woman, a person who has suffered and was asking him for forgiveness. Jesus saw the right woman, responded correctly, and Mary grew in faith: all the Gospels tell us she was one of the first to witness Jesus' resurrection.
- The crowds on the street got it wrong not once but twice. They first see a military messiah and later that same week they see an imposter. Each time they acted on their false perceptions, first lauding him as an earthly liberator and later had him executed.
- There are many more examples from Peter the (almost) rock; Judas the 'disciple' who was actually a betrayer; Pilate the 'governor' who so scared of popular

opinion that he preferred to listen to a crowd than oversee Roman law; a Centurion sees a peasant fit for gruesome execution and ends up saying, 'Truly, this man was the Son of God'.

But it's not all bad: being a twin gave Thomas an advantage over the other disciples. Later in the story, Thomas meets Jesus. This time it's a first-hand encounter so he sees Jesus and doesn't need to rely on other witnesses. It also enables him to leap ahead of his fellow disciples. Having been a repeated victim of mistaken identity he computes the importance of proof, finds it when he sees Jesus' hands and side, and then acts quickly. This time, even though the disciples have seen Jesus twice and Thomas has only seen him once, it's Thomas who utters the first draft of the Apostles' Creed when he says, 'My Lord and my God!'

So the message of St Thomas is not the superiority of blind belief over blind doubt. Blind doubt is indeed unhelpful and unwise—Jesus says so in this story. Rather, Thomas is saying that intelligent doubt is better than blind faith if used as a means of reaching a greater, mature faith. So, for a twin, the real message of this story is that a questioning doubt can lead to belief. And in this story, that message translates into checking to see if a person who looks like Jesus is indeed the real Jesus and then act accordingly.

Before today's Gospel passage, Thomas had seen saw Jesus crucified and heard the crowds shouting for blood, so he knew the power of mistaken identity. Many of us do. That's why Thomas waited before deciding what he should do. He wanted to make sure of the person he thought he saw. *But then he acted ... and acted decisively.* History says that straight after Pentecost, Thomas travelled to India to establish the oldest Church still on earth, the *Bar Toma*, the 'Church of Thomas' which is still there today.

The Gospel passage is therefore inviting us to look at Jesus and first decide who we see. Is it Jesus the prophet or his twin Jesus the holy man? Or is it Jesus the miracle worker or his twin Jesus the Son of God? Or is it Jesus the Messiah, or Jesus the fulfilment of the law, or Jesus the human part of God the Trinity ... do we see Jesus or do we see someone who outwardly looks like him? We need to get to know him before we can recognise him out of context, in others, demonstrating his trademark unpredictability.

Each of these lookalike Jesuses requires a response. That response needs to include a brief analysis: 'is this the true Jesus or someone who merely looks like him?' We then act in faith, our actions demonstrating that we wish to live by the new creed, 'My Lord and my God!'

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

We pray to Jesus who is present with us to eternity.
Jesus, light of the world,
bring the light and peace of your gospel to the nations ...
Jesus, Lord of life,

All in your mercy, hear us.

Jesus, bread of life,
give food to the hungry ...
and nourish us all with your word.
Jesus, Lord of life,

All in your mercy, hear us.

Jesus, our way, our truth, our life,
be with us and all who follow you in the way ...
Deepen our appreciation of your truth
and fill us with your life.

Jesus, Lord of life,

All in your mercy, hear us.

Jesus, Good Shepherd who gave your life for the sheep,
recover the straggler,
bind up the injured,
strengthen the sick
and lead the healthy and strong to new pastures.

Jesus, Lord of life,

All in your mercy, hear us.

Jesus, the resurrection and the life,
we give you thanks for all who have lived and believed in you ...
Raise us with them to eternal life.

Jesus, Lord of life,

All in your mercy, hear us.

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 See what a morning (please 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 of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

All Amen.

Sunday 16 April 2023

11

The Second Sunday of Easter

HYMN 4 Halleluia!

(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

Lord God our Father,
through our Saviour Jesus Christ
you have assured your children of eternal life
and in baptism have made us one with him:
deliver us from the death of sin
and raise us to new life in your love,
in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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.