

Mount Eliza Anglican Church – Easter 2 Holy Communion – 19 April 2020

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PART 1 - OPENING PRAYERS

GREETING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Christ is risen, alleluia

He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

SENTENCE OF SCRIPTURE

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.

1 Peter 1.3

Let us pray

God of everlasting mercy,

each year in this season of Easter

you enliven the faith of your holy people.

Increase in us the grace you have already bestowed,

that we may understand more fully in whose font we have been washed,

in whose Spirit we have been reborn,

and in whose blood we have found redemption.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

STATEMENT OF FORGIVENESS

In the Easter season, we celebrate that forgiveness is already ours. Therefore our confession is more of a statement.

Lord Jesus, you raise us to new life.

Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you forgive us our sins.

Christ have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you feed us with the living bread. Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

In the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus has commissioned us to announce the forgiveness of sins.

Sisters and Brothers, our sins are forgiven;

let us be at peace. Alleluia! **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty and eternal God,

the strength of those who believe

and the hope of those who doubt:

may we, who have not seen, have faith

and receive the fullness of Christ's blessing,

who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Let us declare our faith in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ:

**Christ died for our sins
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he was buried;
he was raised to life on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures;
afterwards he appeared to his followers,
and to all the apostles:
this we have received,
and this we believe. Amen.**

Based on 1 Corinthians 15:3-7

PAUSE VIDEO

PART 2 CHILDREN'S STORY AND DOWNLOADABLE MATERIAL [HERE](#)

PART 3 LOOK UP AND READ THROUGH THE READINGS, LISTEN TO THE SERMON PODCAST (READ ALONG IF YOU WISH) AND PRAY THE INTERCESSIONS.

READINGS

PSALM 16

GOSPEL READING - John 20:19-31

SERMON by Libby Paterson (Pastoral Minister)

[Available as an audio download](#)

Let us pray,
Lord, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, and reflect you. Amen.

Seeing is believing...right. It is a term well known to us. We hear it often. It suggests scepticism; it implies that we will not accept the truth or a fact of something unless we can somehow see it.

Today's gospel reading involves a lot of "seeing". Of seeing visually, of seeing into people's hearts, seeing human frailty and seeing and acknowledging relationship with God.

Let's go back a bit...it's been a week since the chaos and awful crucifixion and burial on Good Friday, ...the Resurrection of Christ. and a lot has happened in Jerusalem.

We are told that very early on Easter Sunday morning Mary Magdalene had visited and seen the Risen Christ outside the empty tomb. She was indeed excited, she believed what she had seen, and then going and declaring to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord". Likewise, Peter and John have seen the shroud neatly folded in the empty tomb on the same morning, but not Christ. They didn't have Mary's experience. The disciples are shell shocked and confused. Where is Jesus?

A week later, on the first day of the sabbath, we find the disciples, and they are in the same place they were on Easter night. It is now evening, it's dark and they are huddled behind the same locked doors.

Why locked doors? Well, generally it's because you don't want someone to enter. You are frightened. The evangelist John tells us that the doors were "locked for fear of the Jews". They are also possibly afraid for their own lives, afraid of their uncertain futures. Perhaps, they are wondering what would happen to them? What was their fate? However, it's also important for us to remember that they were coming together in difficult times, perhaps also for comfort and reassurance in being together. There is a comfort in collectively. Perhaps that's what's so difficult now, we are all being "socially distanced".

Perhaps, just maybe, they were afraid of Jesus. After all, they had failed him miserably. Peter had denied him three times, and the rest, except for John had deserted him. After their behaviour on Good Friday, the disciples may have expected a rebuke or blame. Perhaps the *last* person the disciples wanted to meet on that evening was Jesus, risen from the dead to confront them with their failures.

So, it is at this very anxious time, locked away, that the Risen Jesus appears to them- at a time of fear and uncertainty. Indeed, Jesus knows what our needs are, our low points. He knows us well. He had, on a previous occasion, told the disciples, "I know the hairs on your head, don't be afraid" (Luke:12).

The evangelist John wants us to see that the risen Jesus was not limited by locked doors, he came, *into* the room, *into their dwelling*. Friends, he also comes into our dwelling, into our situation. He who is himself, "the door", of the sheep (10:70) comes right through those locked doors and appears in the midst of his terrified sheep. Closed doors are no obstacle for the resurrected Jesus.

Jesus *comes not to confront* his disciples with their failures, but to *grant them peace*. His gentle greeting, "Peace be with you," carries the sense of the Hebrew, "shalom," a *blessing* that denotes *more than* tranquillity, but a deep and holistic sense of *well-being*, the kind of peace the world cannot give (14:27), and a peace that comforts one not to be worried or afraid.

Jesus then proceeds to show his disciples his wounded hands and his side, the marks of the Passion. so that they *can see that it is really him*. It was a positive form of identification for their conviction. Not only have they seen him, they have *heard his voice*. He is not a ghost or an apparition. It was he, the same Jesus they had known, however much He might now be transformed. Their reaction...one of rejoicing in seeing the Lord, when he had previously told them that "You are sad now. But I will see you, and you will be so happy, that no one will be able to change the way you feel" (16:22). ***Their conviction brought them joy, they believed, and their faith was affirmed.***

Then for the *second time*, Jesus speaks a blessing of peace and directs them, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you". He has set them and us *a living example*. He has demonstrated what it is that they, and *we*, are to do. Now, as Jesus has consummated the task that he came to accomplish, the task that the Father laid upon him, he sends his followers into the world.

Friends, we also, as the disciples, are sent and *commissioned* to continue Jesus's mission of revealing God to the world. To plant the church. They and we will not be left alone in this daunting task. Having commissioned the disciples, Jesus bestows upon them the empowering equipment they will need for the discharge of their commission. He promised to send another Advocate (one who is called alongside someone who would be there with them forever. (14:16-17).

He *breathes* into his disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit (20:22). This "Spirit of truth" will teach and remind them of all that Jesus has said to them and guide them in all truth (14:26: 16:12-14).

In direct contrast to the disciples' experience of the appearance of the risen Jesus, was that of the "missing" disciple Thomas. Where was he? We don't know, we are not told, but what is important is that he *missed out* on the experience that the disciples had. Some describe him as hard-headed, however, poor Thomas, just his luck to miss out.

Thomas is sceptical when the disciples tell him "*We have seen the Lord*". He didn't doubt that the other disciples had seen something but could not grasp the *reality* of their experience. He refused to believe Jesus had risen from the dead. To be convinced, he wants proof to believe. He *demands* evidence...to see and touch Jesus physically, wounds and all. He *needed an experience* to occur, on his terms. However, he is only asking for nothing more than the others had already seen and received earlier.

How often do we make demands of God, and what sort of state are we in when we do that?

The absolute graciousness and wonder of *this story* is that Jesus does appear, to provide exactly what Thomas needs and is craving. One week later, *after* Thomas had re-joined the rest of the disciples, again, in a locked upper room. It suggests that that Thomas was not the only one *still*, perhaps, needing assurance that Jesus had in fact conquered death.

There is little doubt that Jesus made a second appearance, and that it was for the benefit of Thomas (and indeed, perhaps us). For when he saw the risen Christ and heard his familiar voice, *everything changed*. He didn't necessarily touch Jesus's wounds, even though Jesus invited him to.

His immediate response to the sight of Jesus's wounds is with the highest confession of anyone in the Gospel. It is a statement of trust, belief and relationship; it was to worship Jesus and to bear witness if his deity: "*You are my Lord and my God*" (20:28). This is so deeply personal and full of acknowledgement. It is so akin to the Psalmist David in today's appointed Psalm 16, who in the midst of trouble and confusion, trusts God and acknowledges him "I run to you for safety...only you are my Lord. You Lord are all I want", (Psalm 16: 1-2). How often are we in that place when we call out to our Risen saviour and say, "My Lord and My God"?

Jesus had every right and reason to leave Thomas in his unbelief, however, in his great love for Thomas, and for all of humanity. He merely says, “Do not disbelieve, but believe”.

His invitation to all doubters is the same as to Thomas: investigate for yourself. Test the evidence, and, like Thomas, don't be faithless, but believing.

Jesus response to Thomas (20:29) is not judgemental or a rebuke, but *instead a blessing for all who come to believe without having had the benefit of a flesh and blood encounter with Jesus*. Indeed, the writers very purpose of this gospel, addresses all of us who have not seen but have heard this testimony. “But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name” (20: 30-31).

That Thomas had initially doubted is in fact the start of his faith journey, his departure point from doubt to believing. Doubting Thomas” became Confessing Thomas”. With those words of recognition, Thomas named a new relationship, a new worldview, a new way of being. It is the story of resurrection in Thomas's life. The fact of his disbelief is a starting place, nothing more, nothing less. It's neither good nor bad. It's a starting place, and we all have our own personal starting place in our journey of faith and belief.

As the Risen Jesus came to those in this story, the disciples and Thomas, who were in different states of doubt and belief, so he will come to us in comfort, peace and truth, and we, in return, are charged and equipped by the power of the Holy Spirit to continue his commission and to believe.

Friends, we are comforted in knowing and believing that the exalted Redeemer will ever show himself openhanded and open hearted to all his faithful friends and believers.

Concluding prayer:

*Let us pray: Almighty and ever living God, who strengthened your Apostle Thomas with sure and certain faith in your Son's Resurrection: grant us so perfectly and without doubt to believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God, that our faith may be never found wanting in your sight:
Through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

INTERCESSIONS – by Sarnia Birch

Heavenly Father, we bring to you our prayers for your broken world.

We pray for your people in distress across the world because of the coronavirus pandemic.

To people who are sick, bring healing. To people who are displaced, isolated, or cut off from family, friends, or work, bring comfort and companionship. To children at school from home or in childcare, bring acceptance and confidence. We pray for teachers and carers as they learn new ways to work.

Work with nurses, doctors, paramedics, and administrative staff, especially those known to us, as they care for the sick and protect them from harm.

Give skill and fruitful research to scientists as they search for treatments, prevention, and a cure.

To public health authorities, give wisdom to decide the best ways to manage both this crisis and our anxieties. To us in isolation, give patience, determination, and initiative.

When communities are fearful, give a calm spirit, and kindness to neighbours and strangers.

Through this testing time, and through all the risks we face together, teach us once again how we can love one another as you have loved us.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord, we bring our prayers for your divided church, that we may recognize those beliefs we have in common and work together to share your gospel.

We pray especially for our parish while we are physically separated from each other, that we will foster our care for each other and continue a sense of community. We give thanks for the technology and expertise which allows us to worship together while in our homes.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord, we bring our prayers for our fractured community, for those who suffer prejudice and hatred, neglect and abuse, indifference, and rejection. May we be willing to play our part in bringing comfort and justice.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord, we bring our prayers for all who are hurt. We pray for comfort and healing for those whose bodies are in pain or whose minds are confused; those who are friendless or grief-stricken; those without hope for the future; those especially who are separated from family support.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord, we remember those who have died, especially those from this parish whose anniversaries occur near this time. We give thanks for Thomas and for all your saints who have known you as the risen Christ. May we, too, recognise you in our midst, that with all your saints we may come to the fullness of joy in your presence.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, you have promised to hear our prayers.

Grant that what we have asked in faith we may by your grace receive, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Adapted from *Let Us Pray*, Janet Nelson)

LORD'S PRAYER

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.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory, are yours now and for ever. Amen.

RESUME VIDEO FOR PART 4 – VIDEO OF HOLY COMMUNION

GREETING OF PEACE [PRIEST]

Christ is risen. Alleluia!
The peace of the risen Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have these gifts to share.
Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom.
Blessed be God for ever.

HOLY COMMUNION

O loving God, in union with Christian people throughout the world and across the centuries gathered to make Thanksgiving, hearing your holy Word and receiving the Precious Body and Blood of your dear Son, we offer you praise and thanksgiving. Even though we are dispersed from tasting the Bread of Heaven and drinking the Cup of Salvation we pray that you will unite us with all the baptised and with your Son who gave his life for us.

The Lord be with you,
And also with you.
Lift up your hearts;
We lift them to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

All glory and honour, be yours now and always, mighty Creator, everliving God.
We give you thanks and praise for your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who by the power of your Spirit was born of Mary and lived as one of us.
He is the true Paschal Lamb
who was offered for us
and has taken away the sin of the world.
And now we give you thanks that you raised him in triumph from the dead.
By his death, he has destroyed death
and by his rising to life again
has restored us to eternal life.
Therefore, we lift our voices to praise you, saying,

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.**

And now we thank you for these gifts of bread and wine; may we who receive them, as Jesus said, share his body and his blood.

On the night he was betrayed, he took bread and gave you thanks.
He broke the bread and gave it to his friends, and said, 'Take and eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper he took the cup and gave you thanks. He shared the cup with them and said, 'This is my blood poured out so that sins may be forgiven. Do this in remembrance of me.'

**Christ has died,
Christ has risen,
Christ will come again.**

You have gathered us together to feed on Christ and to remember all he has done for us: Fill us with your Spirit that we may follow Jesus in all we do and say, working for justice and bringing your peace to this world that you have made. Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Blessing and honour and glory and power are yours forever and ever. Amen

THE BREAKING AND SHARING OF THE BREAD AND WINE

As this broken bread was once many grains,
which have been gathered together and made one bread:
**so may your Church be gathered
from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.**

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

Eternal God, giver of life,
in the breaking of the bread we know the risen Lord.
May we who celebrate this holy feast
walk in his risen light
and bring new life to all creation.

**Living God,
make us apostles of the risen Christ.
Give us joyful hearts, words of hope,
and grace to recognize the Lord Jesus when he meets us,
wherever we are on the road.**

BLESSING

God the Father, by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead, strengthen you to walk with him
in his risen life
and the blessing of God
our Creator, Redeemer and Giver of life
be with you always.
Amen.

DISMISSAL

We go in peace of Christ. **Alleluia! Amen.**