

Home Worship for April 2018 – Revd Becky Jarratt

1st April 2018 (Easter Day)

“He is not here – He is risen!”

Read Luke Chapter 24: 1 – 12

Easter Day is seen as being a great celebration in the Christian church. Jesus was crucified, yet he rose again on the third day. For many Christians, Easter is an even more important part of their spiritual life than Christmas Day.

Easter is often seen as a symbol of fresh beginnings. The Easter eggs that we exchange reflect the image of the cycle of new life, and the beauty of spring is often in full flow by the time we celebrate this festival.

Yet for the disciples and other followers of Jesus, this was indeed a challenging time. They believed that Jesus was the Son of God, but He had been crucified. Now His body had disappeared from the tomb. What could be going on? It is likely that they were in mourning for the leader that they had lost, and concerned for their own fates as those in power might seek out Jesus’ followers and punish them.

And what of Jesus’ message? He taught us to love the Lord our God and to love one another. Everyone had listened to Jesus – even those who hated Him knew what He taught. Now that Jesus was gone, would His message also be lost?

I have heard a lovely analogy about Jesus’ death. It won’t be long before people in this country find dandelions growing in their lawns and in other places around them. When the dandelion has finished flowering, we see what is known as a “clock”. The plant is left with a downy seed head, which little children love to blow off to see if they can tell the time of day.

The Jewish leaders may have tried to crush Jesus’ message, but they were unable to stop it spreading. If you blow on a dandelion head, the seeds spread far and wide. It is almost impossible to pick them up before they start seeding elsewhere. The despondent followers of Jesus may have despaired at His loss, but His words were carried to almost every corner of the globe. We can share this message of love to everyone we meet by our dealings with other people. We can treat them with kindness and compassion, and the ripples that we have started may reach far further than we realise.

Prayer *Dear Lord Jesus, we thank You for the gift of love that you shared with the world. We pray that we can be a positive influence on those around us and share Your gift willingly and freely with all we meet. Amen.*

8th April 2018

“Stay with us, for it is nearly evening.”

Read Luke 24:13 – 35 and 2 Samuel 12:1-14

Have you experienced someone unexpectedly coming into your life and changing your perception of the way you view things? Or has someone turned your world upside down?

I feel that I have met certain people at particular times because that was when I needed them to help me on my journey. For the most part, the lessons that I have learnt have been happy ones, but there have also been occasions where I might have preferred not to have had that experience!

David needed Nathan’s story to show him how his behaviour was unacceptable. Nathan used a parable to demonstrate this, as David was up in arms about the treatment of the poor neighbour by

the rich man. It enabled him to look at the way he was conducting himself, yet it needed Nathan to illustrate this to him. Sometimes we need a real shock to remind us that we have turned away from the Lord and our original motives. It is easy for us to move away, little by little, and to forget our good intentions. It can be a stranger that helps us work this out, or someone closer to home. We may not like it being brought to our attention, but it helps us in the long run.

The disciples that were walking with the stranger on the road to Emmaus seemed keen for him to stay with them, even though he had told them that they were foolish. Did they want to hang on to him because they felt he knew more about Jesus than they did, and may eventually reveal this to them? Or had something deep inside of them been awakened? *“Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”* (v 32)

It is not always easy to identify why someone who challenges us has been brought into our lives at the time. It may only be afterwards that we realise that they have opened our eyes to something that we were not aware of. It might be that we have been focussing on ourselves and not on what the Lord asks us to do. We may have been suffering from an attack of pride, and we needed taking down a peg or two to keep us from straying too far from the path. Or perhaps we were looking inward and had forgotten what our original intentions had been.

Prayer *Lord, help us to realise when we have strayed from Your path. Allow us to have our eyes opened by those around us, and to graciously accept the truth when we need to be reminded. Help us to forgive ourselves when we are truly sorry. Amen.*

15th April 2018

“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Read John 20:19-29

My daughter twisted me into knots this morning. She asked if unicorns were real. I said that they were not, and was told that just because I hadn't seen one in the flesh didn't mean that they did not exist.

She was quite right in one respect. I do not have to see something to believe it is there. Just because I cannot prove that the Lord is real does not mean that I do not believe in Him. I think it would be harder for me to believe if I did not see the results of His work in my life and in the world around me.

No matter what hand we feel we have been dealt, or how challenging things are for us at times, we are still blessed. The Lord provides opportunities for us to see His influence but we need to open our minds and hearts to appreciate His love.

This week, take some time to think about the world around you. Choose some or all of the things on the list below, and see if you can experience the Lord's blessings in your life that day.

- Look out for a wild flower growing where you least expect it.
- Witness the innocent joy in a child's face as they play.
- Give someone your full attention while they talk to you.
- Smile and greet a stranger with warmth in your eyes.
- See the miracle of new life through growth in nature at this time of spring.

Prayer *Heavenly Father, help me to feel the blessing of Your work in everything around me. Help me to appreciate that Your influence is always there, even when I do not expect it. Amen.*

22nd April 2018

“It is the Lord!”

Read John 21:1-14

Many of the disciples were fishermen, so it was only natural that they would want to resume their fishing after the death of Jesus. It would bring them comfort and a sense of stability to be back in a situation that they knew well. Jesus had said He would meet them in Galilee, so this is where they fished. That they were able to collect fish after the stranger had told them to put their nets on the right side of the boat when before they had caught nothing for hours was clearly miraculous to the disciples.

Again, the disciples believed that the stranger they saw was indeed their beloved Jesus. Perhaps they needed to see the miracle to be able to believe. We do not have miracles performed for us, and yet we know that the Lord our God is our Saviour and Redeemer.

Read the words below from True Christian Religion, and meditate on how we can believe in the Lord without having seen his physical manifestation.

Faith is like a bubble in the air. It was beautifully coloured in the first and second ages, but was in danger of bursting in the third and following ages because no one saw God. Therefore to preserve our faith about him, faith in him, and faith from him, it pleased Jehovah God to come down and take on a human manifestation. He did this to bring himself into view and to convince us that God is not a figment of our imagination; he is the absolute being who was and is and will be from eternity to eternity. God is not a three-letter word; he is everything real from alpha to omega. Therefore he is the life and salvation of all who believe in him as a God who can be seen, although he is not the life and salvation of those who say they believe in a God who cannot be seen, because believing, seeing, and recognising are one. This is why the Lord said to Philip, 'Those who see and recognise me, see and recognise the Father.' This is also why the Lord says elsewhere, 'The Father's will is for them to believe in the Son. Those who believe in the Son have eternal life. Those who do not believe in the Son will not see life; in fact, God's anger remains upon them. '

TCR 159:7

Prayer *Heavenly Father, we thank you for demonstrating Your unending love for us in tangible ways. Help us to be like the fishermen in Galilee, trusting in You with all of their hearts and minds. Amen.*

The Lord's Prayer.

29th April 2018

“Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

Read John 21:15 – 25

Isn't it infuriating when we have worked hard at something, only for someone else to receive the credit? This happens at times without any intended malice – others don't always realise how much we have worked in the background, but there are times when others deliberately steal our thunder.

I remember quite clearly a disagreement that happened when I was at school. A special student teacher was about to move on from the school, and our class were getting her a present. One student suggested buying a glass ornament for her to remember us by, and another agreed to purchase it. When the time came to present the gift, the child who had made the suggestion in the first place was left sobbing at the back while the beloved teacher praised the seemingly thoughtful girl who handed it over.

In the passage from John, Peter appears to be troubled by the presence of “*the disciple whom Jesus loved*”. It feels almost as if Peter is jealous. The very expression describing this disciple could be enough to raise the hackles of Peter, who had just been asked repeatedly if he loved Jesus. Peter was always spoken of as the first of the disciples, but there was one that Jesus loved more. Peter must also have been struggling with his conscience as he had denied his affiliation with Jesus three times before He was crucified. Peter, along with many of the disciples, found it difficult to understand what Jesus was teaching them. He said that he believed, but there were times that his faith was not strong enough, and he felt that he had let himself and Jesus down.

And yet in John 21 Jesus gave him the opportunity to repent and to follow Him again. Our pride sometimes gets in the way of our spiritual development. We may wish to be the one who is recognised for the good deeds, rather than being content to work quietly in the background while someone else gets the glory. It takes courage and times of reflection to realise that this is going on within us. Realising that it is actually the Lord working through us when we do something good can also be a hard pill to swallow, but we need to remember this in order to truly follow Him.

Besides the passages in the Word where deeds and doing are mentioned, there are also a great number where love and loving are mentioned; and by loving is meant the same as by doing. For he who loves also does. For to love is to will, because everyone wills what he inwardly loves; and to will is to do, since everyone does that which he wills, when he is able. A deed, moreover, is nothing else but the will in act.

Apocalypse Explained 785:6

A challenge for us all in the coming week:

- Help another person without being asked and without expecting gratitude.

Prayer *Risen Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, we thank You for the opportunities You give us to come back to You when we have turned away. We pray that we can keep in our minds the fact that our good comes from You. Allow us to be humble in our deeds and dealings with others. Amen.*

Blessing. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you. The Lord lift his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.