*St Barnabas with Christ Church: 2nd Sunday of Easter: 11th April 2021*

**Welcome to St Barnabas’ BLT**

**Sunday Brunch**

**OPENING** This is the Good News –

 the grave is empty, Christ is risen.

 **HALLELUJAH!**

This is the Good News –

 the light shines in the darkness

 and the darkness can never put it out.

 **HALLELUJAH!**

This is the Good News –

 once we were no people,

 now we are God’s people.

**HALLELUJAH!**

Christ is our peace,

the indestructible peace we receive

when we come into his living presence.

**GREETING**Alleluia, Christ is risen: **HE IS RISEN INDEED. ALLELUIA!**

**SONG***Listen and sing along on youtube …*[www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKB8ZuN07z8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKB8ZuN07z8)

*Sing alleluia to the Lord! Sing alleluia to the Lord!*

 *Sing alleluia! Sing alleluia! Sing alleluia to the Lord!*

 *Sing Christ is risen from the dead.*

*Sing Christ is risen from the dead.*

 *Sing Christ is risen, Sing Christ is risen,*

*Sing Christ is risen from the dead.*

*Sing alleluia to the Lord! Sing alleluia to the Lord!*

 *Sing alleluia! Sing alleluia! Sing alleluia to the Lord!*

**READING****Acts 4:32-35**

32 Now 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.

33 With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 34 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.

35 They laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. *New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised*

**REFLECTION by Steve O’’Rourke**

Would you like to live in a community like the one described in Acts? They clearly cared for each other deeply, to the point that ‘there was not a needy person among them’.

It sounds incredibly desirable, a kind of utopian vision, but it came at a cost. No one claimed ownership of anything. All their individual possessions and even their property was laid down for the sake of the whole group.

When I start to think about this, I very quickly start to see ‘flaws’ in this plan. What if someone took advantage of the situation? What about those extra special possessions everyone has? What about common sense and financial security?

So what caused them to live like this? How were they able to live with such open handed generosity? I would suggest it is because this community were shaped by a very present reality - the resurrection of Jesus. They were listening to the story of Jesus directly from the mouths of apostles like ‘doubting’ Thomas who had actually touched His nail scarred hands.

All of Jesus’ teaching about sacrificial love now had a dynamic energy. They had total faith in God’s power to bring about glorious new life out of death. Their deepest grief had turned to their greatest joy. They understood clearly that for life to grow a seed must fall to the ground.

Sharing possessions and caring for each other to the extent that we read in Acts requires a kind of ‘death’. Our desire for control, security and status all end up getting laid down for the sake of something greater. We leave the thrones of our own little kingdoms in order to be drawn into the glorious Kingdom of God.

May the truth of the resurrection continue to shape our lives and transform our communities.

**PRAYER**

As we reflect on the early followers in the book of Acts, and their joyful enthusiasm, we may be reminded how often our discipleship is feeble, our love luke-warm, our commitment half hearted…

**Lord,**

**bring new life where we are worn and tired,**

**new hope where there is only despair,**

**new love where we have become hard hearted,**

**forgiveness where we feel hurt and where we have wounded,**

**and the joy and freedom of your Holy Spirit**

**where we feel isolated or imprisoned.**

*Silence*

To all and to each, where regret is real, God pronounces his pardon,

and he grants us the right to begin again.

**THANKS BE TO GOD! AMEN.**

**DEDICATION**

**Living Lord, we offer ourselves to you, and this day before us.**

**Keep us each close to you, and grant us a sense of stillness.**

**Help us all to be restful, thoughtful, prayerful and joyful,**

**in offering worship and service. For your glory, AMEN.**

**Sunday Tea**

The Lord grant us a quiet night and a perfect end to the day.

**Gospel Reading – John 20:19-31**

 **19**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.’ **20**After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. **21**Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ **22**When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. **23**If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’

 **24**But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. **25**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.’

**26**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.’ **27**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.’ **28**Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ **29**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.’

 **30**Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. **31**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.

**Thomas Reflecting**

I expected him to tell me off,

not - as you might think –

for doubting.

We had all doubted, at different times,

and he was never angry.

Indeed, he doubted himself, sometimes,

or, if he didn’t

he certainly understood how it felt,

because he would sing the Psalms of doubt

with great fervour.

Doubt wasn’t an enemy to him.

He could stand us doubting.

It was indifference he couldn’t stand:

indifference and apathy.

*(Pause)*

I expected him to tell me off

perhaps for making conditions.

I did do that and I won’t deny it.

‘If only I see this and do that...then I’ll believe.’

Fancy me,

thinking I could make conditions with God,

but he didn’t take me to task.

He saw that I was happy because I had seen

and he said that they were also happy

who believed without making conditions,

without saying, ‘if only’ or ‘unless’.

*(Pause)*

I expected him to tell me off

because I wasn’t there when he came.

The others were present, I was absent.

It wasn’t their fault or his fault.

It was mine.

I had - for whatever reason –

decided that it was all finished.

He came back to say it was all beginning

I expected him to tell me off.

But he didn’t.

He gave me his hand

and, more than that,

he gave me his peace.

*From* ***Stages on the Way*** *worship resources for Lent,*

*Holy Week and Easter from the Wild Goose Worship Group*

**Closing Prayers**

Lord, save us while we wake and guard us while we sleep

That we may watch with Christ and rest in peace.

In peace we will lie down and sleep

for you alone O Lord make us dwell in safety.

Abide with us, Lord Jesus, for the night is at hand and day is now past.

As the night watch looks for the morning, so do we look for you, O Christ.

Lighten our darkness we beseech thee O Lord,

and by thy great mercy,

defend us from all perils and dangers of this night,

for the love of thy only Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

The Lord bless us and watch over us

The Lord make his face to shine upon us and be gracious to us

The Lord look kindly on us and give us peace. Amen

**Something to think about ..**

“As the resurrection bursts out of the tomb and floods the world so the church must go out with that torrent of good news and love, transformed, celebrating and declaring in word and deed the truth that death is a liar and that life is offered to all.

In this country, in this world we have a choice over the next few years. We can go on as before Covid, where the most powerful and the richest gain and so many fall behind. We have seen where that left us. Or we can go with the flooding life and purpose of the resurrection of Jesus, which changes all things, and choose a better future for all.

The overwhelming generosity of God to us should inspire the same by us, in everything from private acts of love and charity to international aid generously maintained. We have received overwhelmingly, so let us give generously.”

 *(Archbishop Justin, preaching at Canterbury on Easter morning, 4th April)*

*Steve O’Rourke & Andy Gandon*