

Bowland Benefice

Morning Worship for 18 April 2021

Third Sunday of Easter



Welcome to our service today!

Dear Friends

As I write this, preparations are being made for the funeral of HRH Prince Philip following his death last weekend, and by the time you read this the funeral will have taken place. Such a lot can change in so few days.

For our Queen, she will have lost her beloved husband, the man she called her rock and who was the quiet (and sometimes not so quiet) strength behind her, enabling her to serve her country so well for so many years. As a father, grandfather and great-grandfather he will be missed as a steadfast guiding force and often the voice of reason.

For the remaining millions of us, he is a part of our royal family and has just always been there. I am sure most of us will have seen at least some of the media coverage this week and probably seen a different side to a man of so many interests and skills.

We remember Elizabeth our Queen, her children and wider family and pray that they can grieve in peace yet realise how much we also will miss Prince Philip.

May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

Revd Claire

I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Romans 8:38,39)

Let us pray:

Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord, we come to you now in sorrow for our sins, and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength, and not by the power of your resurrection. In your mercy, forgive us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes, as faithless and not believing. We have lived for this world alone and doubted our home in heaven.

In your mercy, forgive us and help us.

May the God of love and power forgive us and free us from our sins. May he heal and strengthen us by his Spirit and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Collect:

*Almighty Father,
who in your great mercy gladdened the disciples
with the sight of the risen Lord:
give us such knowledge of his presence with us,
that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life
and serve you continually in righteousness and truth;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.*

Hymn: Praise my soul the King of heaven

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven,
To his feet thy tribute bring;
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
Evermore His praises sing.
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise the everlasting King.

Praise Him for His grace and favour
To our fathers in distress;
Praise the Lord the same as ever,
Slow to chide, and swift to bless.
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Glorious in His faithfulness.

Fatherlike, He tends and spares us;
Well our feeble frame he knows;
In His hands He gently bears us,
Rescues us from all our foes.
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Widely yet His mercy flows.

Angels in the heights, adore Him,
Ye behold Him face to face;
Saints triumphant, bow before Him,
Gathered in from every race.
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise with us the God of grace.
(Henry Lyte)

Readings:

Acts 3: 1-19

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon. And a man lame from birth was being carried in. People would lay him daily at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the temple.

When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked them for alms. Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, 'Look at us.' And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.

But Peter said, 'I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk.' And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.

Jumping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. All the people saw him walking and praising God, and they recognized him as the one who used to sit and ask for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

While he clung to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's Portico, utterly astonished.

When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, 'You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk?

The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him.

But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.

And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.

'And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer.

Repent therefore and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out.

Luke 24: 36b-48

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'

They were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, 'Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.'

And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.'

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.'

You are witnesses of these things.

Reflection:

I remember many years ago when I was much younger saying to my vicar "I haven't done anything wrong, so why do I need to say sorry to God?" I certainly didn't feel at a young age that I had sinned – that was the really bad stuff wasn't it?

I said that in a bible study group I think, so it was the sort of place where questions had been invited. But I do remember looking around and seeing some people with their eyes popping out at the thought that I didn't realise I was a sinner, and others who were quietly averting their eyes but who might have been wondering the same thing themselves. I was left wishing that I'd never said anything because having been a Christian since I was a child, it

didn't seem right that I was admitting what always seemed like such a big deal at church.

I can't remember the exact explanation at the time, but I do realise now that the SIN word definitely *is* a big deal in church or amongst Christians. It's only over the past few years that I've come to understand more and to accept that being human is therefore to be a sinner.

As humans, we descend from Adam and Eve, the first sinners who changed everything for the rest of humanity for ever more. They sinned by going against God's word, and from then on all of humanity would feel pain and would eventually die. That initial sin committed by Adam and Eve is still held within us all today.

We might think that we do our best to help others, to be kind and charitable and not to think nasty thoughts – although we're never completely successful in any of those things. We always are and always will be sinners. The best thing is that that doesn't mean that we've been abandoned by God. God's son was our saviour. By Jesus Christ suffering the most awful human betrayal, though his pain and his death, he took on our sins.

But we should believe and trust that he did that just for us. We should repent and acknowledge the truth so that there was a point in him dying. We can rejoice, especially in these weeks after Easter, knowing that he died for us because we know that he rose from the dead. Death did not keep him. This is exactly what the writers of the Old Testament had said would happen.

When we have our services of Holy Communion, we say the creed. It's the statement of our belief as Christians and includes the words "we believe" several times. But I wonder how many of us say the creed without really thinking about exactly what we are saying? How many of us really do believe in Jesus Christ and understand what he did for us?

Our readings today from the Book of Acts and St Luke's Gospel also talk about belief, or rather about lack of belief. The passage just before today's reading from Luke's Gospel was when a couple of Jesus' followers were walking on the road to Emmaus. Those people had believed in Jesus during his lifetime, yet after his death even though they felt that there was something different about this man who had come from nowhere to talk to them, it wasn't until after he had disappeared that they realised the man had been the risen Jesus.

We heard today that when Jesus appeared to his disciples, saying “Peace be with you”, they were terrified and again didn’t believe that it was the Jesus Christ they knew so well. It took Jesus eating a piece of fish to prove to them that it was him, that he was alive and standing right in front of them. He had to be alive – dead people don’t eat do they?

Looking at the passage from the Book of Acts, once again the people were disbelieving of a miracle that Peter and John performed. A lame man had been lying outside the temple begging for alms. Peter and John had nothing to give him but healing. The two disciples had behaved towards the disabled man in much the same way as Jesus would have behaved. They quietly but authoritatively got on with healing the man, without a great show. But they *didn’t* do it in their own right or using their own strength, but in the name of and with the authority of Jesus Christ.

I like to think that the lame man was in front of the temple regularly not just so that he would receive the odd bit of money from passers-by, but because he believed that he would receive healing from some of these people who apparently believed in God but who in reality just stepped over him to get inside the temple. That was until Peter and John arrived, with their own belief in Jesus. That belief in Jesus shown by the three of them worked – the man got up and danced about, healed by the miracle of Jesus Christ.

In both passages, we are told that Jesus’ death was the fulfilment of what was written in the Hebrew Bible, our Old Testament. Jesus himself said that it had been written that the Messiah would die and rise from the dead on the third day. And that is just what happened. Jesus said that so that we would believe it. There is nothing at all in scripture that ever mentions that Jesus got it wrong, that what he said would happen *didn’t* ever happen. We can feel secure that when Jesus says something in a certain way, that what he says is true.

So when Jesus also states that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to everyone, then that is what we can believe and do. He opens our minds to understand the scriptures, and that is why we read them still today.

As Christians today we believe that Jesus died and rose again. Jesus Christ is the good news we’ve been waiting for. Not just here in the UK, but across the world. At a time when the whole planet is in turmoil ecologically, physically

and often mentally, calling on Jesus is the key to unlocking our redemption and forgiveness. Through our belief in him, *he* is the key to healing on a global level and he does that through us.

Amen.

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.

Intercessions:

For the life of Prince Philip, for his steadfast and abiding love for Elizabeth our Queen and for his family. We pray for all of the lives he has touched, for the schemes he created including the Duke of Edinburgh Award and for all those who have benefited from his wider work...

We pray for healing within the royal family...

The nations of the world and their leaders, especially our own government as they lead us out of lockdown...

Our emergency services, especially the NHS workers and all who put themselves in the face of the pandemic through their work...

Our neighbours and friends, especially any known to us who are ill in any way, or in any kind of need, for those who are quiet and alone....

Our schools and their teachers and staff, for university students whose lives are so different from what they had expected...

The elderly amongst us, especially at this time....

We pray for those who have just started work again after being furloughed for months, for those who still face redundancies...

For all who feel they have no choices in any area of their lives...

For those who are ill in body, mind or spirit and for those who care for them, for those who fear going out into the wider world now that lockdown is easing...

For all who have recently died, for their families, loved ones and friends who have been unable to gather in their grief...

Special Prayer for today:

*Loving God, with each passing week,
we enter more deeply into the Easter season.
You offer us healing in so many ways
as we long for the grace that helps us
to see Jesus as our risen saviour.
Help us to understand our sins, to accept them
but to ask for your forgiveness.
Give us the vision to do the work of God:
to believe in Jesus, the one he sent.
Amen.*

The 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.
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.*

Hymn: God that madest earth and heaven

God, that madest earth and heaven,
darkness and light;
who the day for toil hast given,
for rest the night;
may thine angel guards defend us,
slumber sweet thy mercy send us;
holy dreams and hopes attend us,
all through the night.

Guard us waking, guard us sleeping,
and when we die,
may we in thy mighty keeping
all peaceful lie;
when the last dread call shall wake us,
do not thou, our God, forsake us,
but to reign in glory take us
with Thee on high.

(Reginald Heber and Frederick Lucian Hosmer)

Blessing:

In the tender mercy of our God, the dayspring from on high has broken upon us, to give light to those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us and all those we love and pray for - now, and for evermore. Amen.