

Collect and Readings for Worship at Home

Sunday 7th April - 2nd Sunday of Easter

Collect:

Risen Christ,
for whom no door is locked, no entrance barred:
open the doors of our hearts,
that we may seek the good of others
and walk the joyful road of sacrifice and peace,
to the praise of God the Father.

Amen

Readings:

First Reading: Acts 4:32-35

The Believers Share Their Possessions

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. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 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. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

Gospel: John 20:19-end

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

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.'

Jesus and Thomas

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.

Reflection:

In our reading today we find the disciples shut away from the world, fearful, alone, vulnerable. The positive here is that they stayed in Jerusalem, waiting to see and hear what was going to happen next. They were fearful we read, and had locked the doors. They were keeping a low profile I think, going dark as we say, getting off grid. get off the streets. Stay shut up, in the dark close the windows, bring the shutters down, the shadow of the day has closed over them. The grave is empty, yes, we believe he has risen, but what do we do next.

It is in to this uncertainty, this fear, this sense of hopelessness, that life and thought emerge from death in to the heart of the room, in to the hearts of all there. Peace be with you. Let's just think about those 4 words. Jesus has been mocked, tried and executed by those he came to save. His first thought, isn't one of revenge it is still one of peace. In to the room, where all hope appears to have departed, where life itself has left, Jesus enters, offering peace to their troubled lives, to a troubled world. That is true then and it is still true today. Jesus enters the room and offers life, to each of them who are ready to receive it, Jesus doesn't ask he just gives. That gift is still what Jesus offers today, the gift of life that will bring us out of the darkened room. A guide to do what is right in our lives, the words of Jesus to guide us through a troubled world. This encounter is summed up by Paul when writing to the Corinthians Ch 13 V 13. Faith, Hope and Love remain and the greatest of these is Love. Faith that Jesus is risen, hope that by following Him lives are changed for ever, love that despite our failings He will stand by us. So, when we read in v 21 that as the Father sent me so I am sending you, we see Jesus is now passing on the task to His followers, those who believe in Him.

In to this reading Thomas appears. Thomas for me sums up what has happened to the disciples. He needed proof of Jesus resurrection. For Thomas there is an escalation of belief from, hearing to personal experience and then to witness. Like Thomas when we implement the words and teaching of Jesus, we give life to the resurrection. It becomes more than just a force for good it becomes and new way of living, not one based on death and ignorance, but on life and thought.