

Sunday 19 April – Disciples on Road to Emmaus

PRAISE: CH4 35 O send thy light forth and thy truth

Prayer

PRAISE: CH4 125 Lord of all being, throned afar

READING: Luke 24:13-24

PRAISE: CH4 577 Christ be beside me

READING: Luke 24:25-35

PRAISE: CH4 189 Be still! For the presence of the Lord

Prayer

PRAISE: 'Twas on that night

SERMON

PRAISE: CH4 405 We sing the praise of him who died

Benediction. Go in peace,
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God
and Fellowship in the Holy Spirit, be with us all **AMEN**

CH4 35

1 O send thy light forth and thy truth;
let them be guides to me,
and bring me to thine holy hill,
even where thy dwellings be.
Then will I to God's altar go,
to God my chiefest joy:
yea, God, my God, thy name to praise
my harp I will employ.
my harp I will employ.

2 Why art thou then cast down, my soul?
what should discourage thee?
And why with vexing thoughts art thou
disquieted in me?
Still trust in God; for him to praise
good cause I yet shall have:
he of my countenance is the health,
my God that doth me save.
my God that doth me save.

TUNE: Invocation



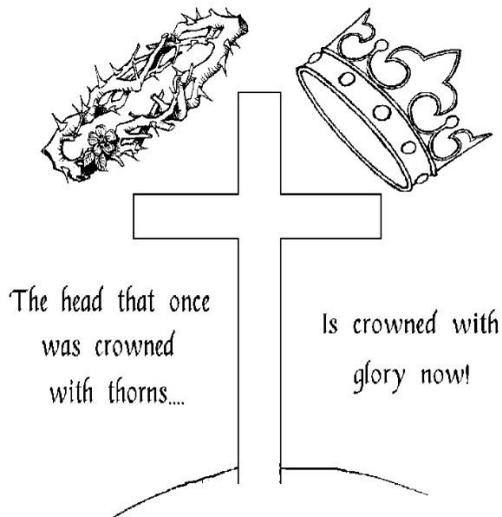
Gracious God we come to worship you. We wonder at your love which gives us a very special part in Creation. We are in awe that you are always there and have kept approaching your people to make your love known: that you seek to bring light into our darkness. We are amazed that, in spite of our current crisis, we can look out and see your Creation unfolding as usual in its wonderful way – with the new life of plants, animals and birds – a sure sign of your faithfulness and your presence with us.

Lord, we have been affected by the failure of our strength, the weakness of our resolve and the crumbling of our vision. We have allowed our spirits to be overcome – and we have faltered and stumbled instead of going ahead faithfully and strongly in your service. Lord, our God, strengthen our spirits and our vision by giving us renewed belief in your Presence with us in everything we do and everywhere we go.

Walk with us, O God, as we go forward, and guide us that we may seek the Light of the world which came into it in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

We ask our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord

Our Father,
Who art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth,
as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil,
For Thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
For ever
AMEN



CH4 125

Lord of all being, throned afar,
thy glory flames from sun and star;
centre and soul of every sphere,
yet to each loving heart how near!

Sun of our life, thy quickening ray
sheds on our path the glow of day;
Star of our hope, thy softened light
cheers the long watches of the night.

Our midnight is thy smile withdrawn,
our noontide is thy gracious dawn,
our rainbow arch thy mercy's sign;
all, save the clouds of sin, are thine.

Lord of all life, below, above,
whose light is truth, whose warmth is love,
before thy ever-blazing throne
we ask no lustre of our own.

Grant us thy truth to make us free,
and kindling hearts that burn for thee,
till all thy living altars claim
one holy light, one heavenly flame.

William Henry Gladstone (1840-1891)

Luke 24:13-24

¹³ On that same day two of Jesus' followers were going to a village named Emmaus, about 11 kilometres from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and they were talking to each other about all the things that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed, Jesus himself drew near and walked along with them; ¹⁶ they saw him, but somehow did not recognize him. ¹⁷ Jesus said to them, "What are you talking about to each other, as you walk along?"

They stood still, with sad faces. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only visitor in Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have been happening there these last few days?"

¹⁹ "What things?" he asked.

"The things that happened to Jesus of Nazareth," they answered. "This man was a prophet and was considered by God and by all the people to be powerful in everything he said and did. ²⁰ Our chief priests and rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and he was crucified. ²¹ And we had hoped that he would be the one who was going to set Israel free! Besides all that, this is now the third day since it happened. ²² Some of the women of our group surprised us; they went at dawn to the tomb, ²³ but could not find his body. They came back saying they had seen a vision of angels who told them that he is alive. ²⁴ Some of our group went to the tomb and found it exactly as the women had said, but they did not see him."

CH4 557

Christ be beside me,
Christ be before me,
Christ be behind me,
King of my heart.
Christ be within me,
Christ be below me,
Christ be above me, never to part.

Christ on my right hand,
Christ on my left hand,
Christ all around me, shield in the strife.
Christ in my sleeping,
Christ in my sitting,
Christ in my rising,
light of my life.

Christ be in all hearts
thinking about me,
Christ be in all tongues
telling of me.
Christ be the vision
in eyes that see me,
in ears that hear me,
Christ ever be.

*from St Patrick's Breastplate, 8th century
adapted James Quinn (b. 1919)*

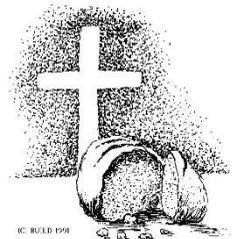
Luke 24:25-35

25 Then Jesus said to them, "How foolish you are, how slow you are to believe everything the prophets said! ²⁶ Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and then to enter his glory?" ²⁷ And Jesus explained to them what was said about himself in all the Scriptures, beginning with the books of Moses and the writings of all the prophets.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther; ²⁹ but they held him back, saying, "Stay with us; the day is almost over and it is getting dark." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ He sat down to eat with them, took the bread, and said the blessing; then he broke the bread and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight. ³² They said to each other, "Wasn't it like a fire burning in us when he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?"

³³ They got up at once and went back to Jerusalem, where they found the eleven disciples gathered together with the others ³⁴ and saying, "The Lord is risen indeed! He has appeared to Simon!"

³⁵ The two then explained to them what had happened on the road, and how they had recognized the Lord when he broke the bread.



CH4 189

Be still,
for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here;
come bow before him now
with reverence and fear:
in him no sin is found –
we stand on holy ground.

Be still,
for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here.

Be still,
for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around;
he burns with holy fire,
with splendour he is crowned:
how awesome is the sight –
our radiant King of light!

Be still,
for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around.

Be still,
for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place:
he comes to cleanse and heal,
to minister his grace –
no work too hard for him.
In faith receive from him.

Be still,
for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place.

David J Evans (b. 1957)

Almighty and Eternal God, we rejoice in your Presence, thanking you for our heritage and the Church which is our spiritual home. We thank you for our ability to remember, to pray, to express ourselves in thought, word and song – which are such wonderful gifts. We are aware of how much they mean to us, and how special they make us in your eyes.

We turn our thoughts and minds to the full width of your world which you love, asking you that you will bless all your people everywhere. We pray for places where there is bitterness, strife and war because people seek to impose their will on others or take from them their share of your Creation. Let your powerful Spirit of peace change the hearts and minds of those who see war as a solution. Strengthen and support those who seek to bring peace. Bless the efforts of those who seek to rebuild. Bring comfort to those whose lives are being devastated.

At this time of crisis worldwide because of the Coronavirus outbreak we pray for all who are affected in any way – through their health, through their lack of access to jobs, through the isolation and lock down under which they are having to live. Lord, we recognise the pressures, the harm, the agony and the great weight being put on people at this time.

We pray for our own country, for the Queen, her family and all those in Parliament and local government – doing their best to lead us through this time.

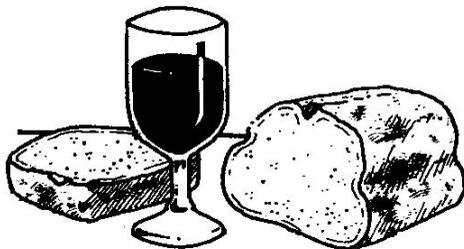
We pray for all those around us in our community, especially those who are faced with difficult times in the days that lie ahead.

So we pray for those in hospital – or ill at home; for those who fear for the future for themselves or a loved one; we pray for those who feel lonely or forsaken; for those who are near to death – and those who watch with them; for those who have lost a loved one and are trying to cope with the pain and emptiness of separation – without being able to share their bereavement with family and friends.

Help us to know that you are always there and ever willing to help and support us.

Receive our thanks, O Lord, for all those who have served you well. Their lives shine out like beacons to guide us. We rejoice in those who have brightened our lives by their presence and given us an introduction to your love. Help us to use their example to enable us to serve you to our heart's desire. We ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake.

AMEN



CH4 376 Paraphrase 35

'Twas on that night when doomed to know
the eager rage of every foe,
that night in which he was betrayed,
the Saviour of the world took bread;

And, after thanks and glory given
to him that rules in earth and heaven
that symbol of his flesh he broke,
and thus to all his followers spoke:

'My broken body thus I give
for you, for all; take, eat, and live:
and oft the sacred rite renew
that brings my wondrous love to view.'

Then in his hands the cup he raised,
and God anew he thanked and praised,
while kindness in his bosom glowed,
and from his lips salvation flowed.

'My blood I thus pour forth,' he cries,
'to cleanse the soul in sin that lies;
in this the covenant is sealed,
and heaven's eternal grace revealed.

'With love to man this cup is fraught,
let all partake the sacred draught;
through latest ages let it pour
in memory of my dying hour.

Scottish Paraphrases, 1781
Matthew 26:26-29

Luke 24:13-24 & 25-35

When we are unsure in our Faith or feeling the pressures of the world on our living, we look to the Disciples as role models of Faith. Sometimes we look at the "Historical" "stained glass" image of them – and are further depressed because we cannot live up to that image. If we are more realistic, we recognise that they also had their difficulties and wavering moments. This shows very well in the earliest days of the Church.

The trauma which had hit the Disciples on Good Friday left them dazed and dis-orientated so that they had difficulty taking in the events of Easter Day. They heard about the empty tomb and they were left with two reactions – hoping that it would lead to further good news – but fearful that something else horrible was going to happen. It is to the credit of the New Testament writers that they have truly and vividly recorded these human weaknesses on this greatest day of human existence. The new Faith didn't come into being in one flash of light – it was a gradual and sometimes painful experience.

The disciples on the Emmaus Road were on their way home from Jerusalem – possibly wondering if they would be safer there – and still depressed by the events of the previous week – unsure how to accept the great news that had been reported to them of the events in the Garden on Easter morning. They carried their depression with them as a cloud which darkened their spirits and closed their eyes – so that they couldn't recognise Jesus when he joined them – and walked and talked with them.

We recognise this situation for we know that our state of mind can colour, or even obscure, what is around us – we see it in different ways, or fail to see things altogether, when we are in certain moods or frames of mind.

Our mood of the moment can be so overpowering that we forget or lay aside knowledge or skills that we have developed which should bring us benefit.

As we grow up, we develop skills to enable us to cope with complicated ways of living. We also amass knowledge about ourselves as human beings and individuals, about others and about our Faith so that we can become strong in understanding and able to help not just ourselves but others as well.

In our passage we see Jesus using three ways to help the disciples to see reality and be lifted clear from the depression that was overwhelming them. In the first stage he encourages them to talk of all the things that are in their mind. This releases their memories of the events of the previous week and shows a longer association with Jesus in which they had come to think of him as Messiah. They express surprise at the report which the women brought back from the tomb that morning and showed signs of bewilderment, and a distinct lack of understanding.

Jesus' next stage was to tap into a comprehensive body of knowledge which he knew they had access to. This was the Scriptures, which we know as the Old Testament.

"And Jesus explained to them what was said about himself in all the scriptures, beginning with the books of Moses and the writings of all the prophets."

Still their mood did not allow them to see clearly what Jesus was saying to them. However, they were still functioning well enough on another level. When they saw that Jesus was contemplating continuing on into the growing darkness, and with the next village some distance away, they invited him in to share some food with them as an act of hospitality.

Jesus then used this situation to bring into play his third stage.

"He sat down to eat with them, took the bread, and said the blessing; then he broke the bread and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him, but he vanished out of their sight."

In that moment, and in that act, their minds were unlocked from paralysis and they were able to access their knowledge and their understanding of themselves and of Jesus.

All this explains why the people of the Early Church started to meet together on the first day of the week and celebrate it as the Lord's Day – instead of continuing to observe the Jewish Sabbath. They were no longer celebrating the completion of Creation and a day of rest – they were celebrating the beginning of a new relationship with God – and a day of worship.

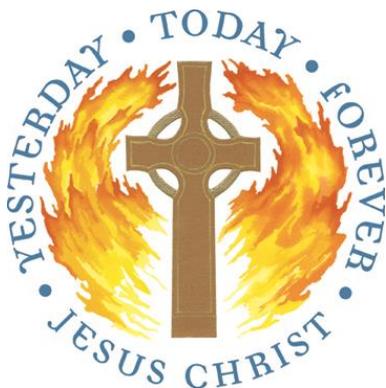
We place special emphasis on the Reading and Preaching of the Word. They give us access to knowledge and understanding. They remind us of the “building bricks of our Faith”. We need more than that to give us nourishment and satisfaction in our Christian life.

We need to be aware of Jesus’ Presence with us in a way which is even greater and deeper than the experience of the disciples on the Emmaus Road, who said,

“Wasn’t it like a fire burning in us when he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?”

We believe that Jesus does walk with us wherever we are going and whatever we are doing – but we also have to set aside time in which we can actively open our hearts and minds to Jesus so that he can make himself known to us in this deeper way.

As we continue our journey through life may we always be aware of Jesus walking with us, may we always be glad that he is there and may we seek to open ourselves to him and to the greater blessings which will come from that willing contact. AMEN



CH4 405

We sing the praise of him who died,
of him who died upon the cross;
the sinner's hope let men deride,
for this we count the world but loss.

Inscribed upon the cross we see,
in shining letters, 'God is love';
he bears our sins upon the tree;
he brings us mercy from above.

The cross! it takes our guilt away;
it holds the fainting spirit up;
it cheers with hope the gloomy day,
and sweetens every bitter cup;

It makes the coward spirit brave,
and nerves the feeble arm for fight;
it takes its terror from the grave,
and gilds the bed of death with light;

The balm of life, the cure of woe,
the measure and the pledge of love,
the sinner's refuge here below,
the angels' theme in heaven above.

Thomas Kelly (1769-1855)

Benediction. Go in peace,
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God
and Fellowship in the Holy Spirit, be with us all **AMEN**

CH4 786 May the God of peace go with us
as we travel from this place;
may the love of Jesus keep us
firm in hope and full of grace. Tune: Ae fond kiss