

12th April 2026. 2nd Sunday of Easter.

Prayer for today: Almighty Father, you have given your only Son to die for our sins and to rise again for our justification: grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness that we may always serve you in pureness of living and truth; through the merits of 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.

Among those who are sick we pray for Rosemary Belshaw, Will Sadler, Leo Pyle, John Gibson, Brenda Clark, Elizabeth Wood, Nigel Baty-Symes, Andrew McKendrick, Kate Marris, Maureen Stevens, Prue and Nancy, Ned Ryan, Daniel Bosman, Suzie Dent, Nick Cook, Christina Baldwin, Lorraine Dodd, Kathleen Lee, Carol McKendrick, Stuart Bell, Maggie Bennett, Elizabeth Sambell, and Heather Loughead.

Among those who have died we remember Ian Dodds, and also Fowler Anderson, Christina Anderson, Bob Tweddle, Jimmy Kirker-Head and Ruby Rose Charman.

Please remember Ian's family, including Jane, Jennifer, Rachael and Simon, in your prayers. There will be a service of thanksgiving for Ian at Whitley Chapel on April 22nd at 2 p.m.

Saturday 18th April . 10.30 a.m. Coffee Morning in Church in support of the work of the Burial Ground Trust. Information and records relating to the churchyard will be on display.

Wednesday 22nd April 7.30 p.m. in the Parish Hall. Annual Meeting of St. Helen's church. All are invited to attend and participate in this meeting.

Readings

Acts 2: 14a, 22-32

Peter addresses the crowd

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: 'Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.

²² ' Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³ This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. ²⁵ David said about him:

“I saw the Lord always before me.

Because he is at my right hand,

I will not be shaken.
²⁶ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest in hope,
²⁷ because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
you will not let your holy one see decay.
²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence.”
²⁹ ‘Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch
David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰ But
he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that
he would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Seeing what
was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he
was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see
decay. ³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of
it.

Psalm 16

Preserve me, O God:
for in thee do I put my trust.

² *O my soul*, thou hast said unto the Lord,
Thou *art* my Lord: my goodness *extendeth* not to thee;

³ *but* to the saints that *are* in the earth,
and *to* the excellent, in whom *is* all my delight.
⁴ Their sorrows shall be multiplied *that* hasten *after* another *god*:
their drink offerings of blood will I not offer,
nor take up their names into my lips.
⁵ The Lord *is* the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup:
thou maintainest my lot.
⁶ The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant *places*;
yea, I have a goodly heritage.
⁷ I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel:
my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.
⁸ I have set the Lord always before me:
because *he is* at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth:
my flesh also shall rest in hope.
¹⁰ For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell;
neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.
¹¹ Thou wilt shew me the path of life:
in thy presence *is* fulness of joy;
at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore.

John 20: 19-31

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples
were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders,
Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with

you!’ ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

²¹ Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’ ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.’

²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord!’

But he said to them, ‘Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.’

²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you!’ ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.’

²⁸ Thomas said to him, ‘My Lord and my God!’

²⁹ Then Jesus told him, ‘Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’

³⁰ Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Thoughts on today’s readings

Our readings today continue to recount the story of Easter and its impact, and we are presented in St. John’s gospel with the contrast between the risen Jesus and his disciples. They are a group of defeated men: they have locked themselves away for fear of the Jewish leaders. Their Lord was put to death: could they be next? And Thomas, who cannot accept the testimony of the others: unless *I* see, unless *I* feel his living body, touch his wounds, I cannot believe. It is not that he does not want to believe, but cannot. The initiative, the action, is always with Jesus. It is he whom locked doors cannot exclude. It is he who commands Thomas to place his hand in his wounds. It is he, fully alive, who breathes upon them the breath and the life that is his: the breath and life of God, so that they may no longer live in the darkness of the captivity they have imposed upon themselves, controlled by fear, but empowered, boldly declaring his Good News openly to the very people who shouted and demanded his crucifixion.

For this is where our first reading brings us: to Jerusalem at Pentecost. Now the disciples, led by Peter, bring their resurrection witness to the people, not minimising their part in his death, but revealing that through this God’s purpose has been fulfilled, on a Friday that was not tragic, but good, in a tomb which was not the end of the story, but the opening of a new world.

This Easter, when justice is trampled upon by the powerful, and defenceless children are butchered like sheep, it is understandable that some may question, ‘Where is that risen Christ now?’ For reply we have the witness of martyrs of more recent times, faithful men and women of the last century, who lived and died in times when it seemed evil had the upper hand.

The Lutheran Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who celebrated Easter with other prisoners shortly before he was hanged, wrote from prison, 'To live in the light of the resurrection – that is the meaning of Easter,' The Jewish writer Etty Hillesum, writing from the camp in the Netherlands where she was interned before she was sent to her death in Auschwitz, wrote, 'You have made me so rich, O God. Please let me share your beauty with open hands. My life has become one uninterrupted dialogue with you, O God.. my own life is one long sequence of inner miracles.'

All these have seen Christ's wounds, and touched his hands and side, and known how little power prison walls and men of violence have against their wounded God. He gave them their freedom, and the peace of which our world is incapable. He breathed the spirit of Easter, the spirit of resurrection upon them.

Do not be troubled; do not be afraid. Jesus Christ has overcome; his life, his spirit, his victory are ours.