

19th April 2026. 3rd Sunday of Easter.

Prayer for today: 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.

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 Loughhead.

Among those who have died we remember Ian Dodds, and also Melvyn Hull, John Nixon, Caroline Clarke, Emily Rutherford Pearce, Jack Cross, and Dorothy Wilson.

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 Wednesday April 22nd at 2 p.m.

Pray also for Sarah and Cerys, mourning the death of Russ, husband and father.

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.

Following the success of this year's Lent study course, it was agreed at a meeting on Thursday to continue this pattern of meetings with Bible study. The meetings will resume in two weeks' time in Juniper and we will be using the new Bible Course created by the Bible Society. I have bought copies of the well-produced accompanying Guide Book and they are available from me.

Readings:

Acts 2: 14, 36-41

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the other eleven apostles and in a loud voice began to speak to the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, listen to me and let me tell you what this means.

³⁶ "All the people of Israel, then, are to know for sure that this Jesus, whom you crucified, is the one that God has made Lord and Messiah!"

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were deeply troubled and said to Peter and the other apostles, "What shall we do, brothers?"

³⁸ Peter said to them, “Each one of you must turn away from your sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven; and you will receive God's gift, the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For God's promise was made to you and your children, and to all who are far away—all whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

⁴⁰ Peter made his appeal to them and with many other words he urged them, saying, “Save yourselves from the punishment coming on this wicked people!” ⁴¹ Many of them believed his message and were baptized, and about three thousand people were added to the group that day.

Verses from Psalm 116

I love the Lord,
because he hath heard my voice *and* my supplications.

² Because he hath inclined his ear unto me,
therefore will I call upon *him* as long as I live.

³ The sorrows of death compassed me,
and the pains of hell gat hold upon me:
I found trouble and sorrow.

⁴ Then called I upon the name of the Lord;
O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.

⁵ Gracious *is* the Lord, and righteous;
yea, our God *is* merciful.

⁶ The Lord preserveth the simple:
I was brought low, and he helped me.

⁷ Return unto thy rest, O my soul;
for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.

⁸ For thou hast delivered my soul from death,
mine eyes from tears, *and* my feet from falling.

⁹ I will walk before the Lord
in the land of the living.

¹² What shall I render unto the Lord
for all his benefits toward me?

¹³ I will take the cup of salvation,
and call upon the name of the Lord.

¹⁴ I will pay my vows unto the Lord
now in the presence of all his people.

¹⁵ Precious in the sight of the Lord
is the death of his saints.

¹⁶ O Lord, truly I *am* thy servant;
I *am* thy servant, *and* the son of thine handmaid:
thou hast loosed my bonds.

¹⁷ I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving,
and will call upon the name of the Lord.

¹⁸ I will pay my vows unto the Lord
now in the presence of all his people,

¹⁹ in the courts of the Lord's house,
in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem.

Luke 24: 13-35

¹³ Now that same day two of the disciples were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself

came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognising him.

¹⁷ He asked them, ‘What are you discussing together as you walk along?’

They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, ‘Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?’

¹⁹ ‘What things?’ he asked.

‘About Jesus of Nazareth,’ they replied. ‘He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. ²² In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴ Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.’

²⁵ He said to them, ‘How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?’ ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

²⁸ As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going further. ²⁹ But they urged him

strongly, ‘Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.’ So he went in to stay with them.

³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² They asked each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?’

³³ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together ³⁴ and saying, ‘It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.’ ³⁵ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognised by them when he broke the bread.

Thoughts on today’s readings

The story of the appearance of Jesus on the road to Emmaus is one of the most beautiful and beloved of the Easter stories. It touches and fires the human imagination: to this day there is a tradition in Germany and elsewhere of an extra place being set at table for Christ the unseen guest. But who were these two disciples? Cleopas does not figure among the 12, and the other is not named. It has been said that they were a man and a woman – his wife, and this makes sense in the context of their inviting their mysterious companion on the journey into their home, and of the imagery of the Easter story being a link to Genesis and Eden. For in St. John’s account of Easter we read of Mary thinking Jesus was the gardener, and so the account signals to us that we are in effect in the garden of Eden, where Christ is the new Adam, the one who has restored peace between creation and its creator, and broken the spell and curse of death.

Here the couple on the road are that first couple, Adam and Eve, travelling with the one who is the living and creating Word of God. And now, instead of acting in disobedience and taking the forbidden fruit to eat, they have invited Christ into their home and given him their bread, fruit of the earth and work of human hands, to bless. In the act of eating their stolen fruit the eyes of Adam and Eve were opened – to shame and fear, not to being godlike, as the serpent had promised. Here as Christ blesses their bread and breaks it, the eyes of the couple are opened, and they know that the living word of God, Jesus Christ, sits at their table. This time the opening of eyes is not to fear but indeed to joy and enlightenment. No longer do death and the grave have the power to keep them from the truth. For indeed, as they share their sense of wonder, they confirm to one another how their hearts burned within them as Jesus spoke to them, even though they could not recognise him. And now, immediately, though night has fallen, they no longer remain within the shelter of their home, but set off and return to Jerusalem, to share their good news with their fellow disciples, for Christ the light of God is with them, and with him even the darkness is light.

Both here and in the reading from Acts there is a sense of the urgency in sharing the Good news of what God has done in Jesus Christ, as Peter calls those to whom he preaches to a response of repentance and faith. Now is the time, he declares, now is the time to awaken from darkness. The chapter concludes in outlining the marks of that life to which Peter was calling them: to receiving the teaching of the apostles, to fellowship and sharing, to the breaking of bread at the Lord's Supper and to common prayer. For surely here we may see the marks of the life of that family which is the Church of Jesus Christ, not as an ideal to be read about, but as a life to be lived.

These are not stories from long ago: I have been reading about the life of Clare Crocker. She was born in Londonderry during the Troubles, in the 80s. As a child she witnessed a bombing, which left a soldier dead. As a very normal 18 year old she went on holiday to Spain, hoping to enjoy the night life and the parties. Instead, she found herself in a place of pilgrimage, where she had an encounter with Jesus Christ. Her life was changed; as she said, 'I felt it was my sins that nailed the Lord to the cross.. I fell in love with Jesus Christ. He stole my heart.' She gave her life to him. As a 33 year-old, she was serving as a nun in Ecuador, when the school in which she was working collapsed in an earthquake, and she was killed. But now, ten years on, thousands from across Ireland and further afield have been spending a week in prayer in her parish church, fired by her example, and are certain that she was, and is, a saint, one of God's holy ones.