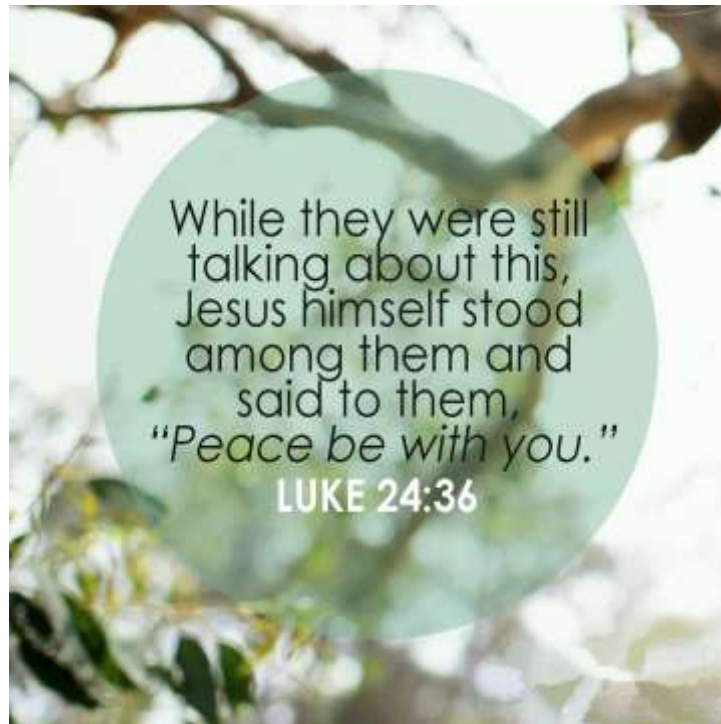


**Reflections & Prayers for Sunday**  
**18<sup>th</sup> April 2021**  
**Easter 3**



One of the hardest and most heart-breaking aspects of the past year – or more – of lockdown is the lack of touch. Some of you will have experienced the sorrow of not hugging or touching relatives; friends have said hello or good bye without the customary warmth of a hug; we have all kept a distance. What a year.

I can easily imagine Jesus saying to his disciples “what a year...” And after the end of it, after the awful events of the crucifixion, the bewildering events of the resurrection, and Jesus’ reunion with his friends, one of the first thing he says to them is, “Peace with be with you.” When they can scarcely believe he is real, Jesus goes further: “Touch me and see.”

An ordinary act that takes on extraordinary significance. Tim Lomax explores this further in his reflection below. To all who are receiving our Church@Home offering, Easter joy and blessings.

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***You may want to find your Bible and read the lessons set for this week:***

Acts 3:12-19

1 John 3.1-7

**Luke 24.36b-48** *Jesus himself stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."*

### **Luke 24.36b-48: Jesus Appears to His Disciples**

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 from the Revd Tim Lomax, Director of Mission & Ministry***

In his hit in the year 2000 Ronan Keating sang 'Life is a Rollercoaster. Just gotta ride it' This past year has certainly been a rollercoaster.

And the ups and downs of the year have prompted in us an array of feelings and emotions sitting alongside one another - joy alongside fear, nervousness alongside hope, relief alongside frustration.

This experience mirrors something of the emotional rollercoaster the disciples were experiencing in their encounter with Christ, recorded in today's gospel passage. And looking at this account, I'd like to explore two aspects of it - how Christ stands with us in the messiness and how he asks us to be with him in the ordinary.

So let's begin with the messiness...

This part of Luke's gospel account reminds us that life is a messy mix of joy and pain, fear and wonder, disbelief and amazement. This is certainly true of our current experience as individuals, families and communities.

We have known the pain and difficulty of isolation, separation, illness, interrupted education, loss of loved ones, and loss of work and the impact on wellbeing and mental health has been immense.

Alongside this we've known the moments of joy because of less travelling, more time at home, the kindness shown to neighbours and those in need, the creativity of churches keeping in touch with people and keeping worship going online or in the building.

We've experienced the wonder of the vaccine, and the fear as we've doubted whether it will bring the hope we imagine, or whether this virus will ever go away. And we've known the amazement we've shared at the dedication of Captain Sir Tom Moore, and those sacrificing so much to work on the frontline.

Life has been and definitely is a messy mixture of all sorts of experiences and emotions. Into this, as with his first followers, Christ meets us in the messiness.

In the crucifying pain, the unbelievable joy of new life, the bewildering change and debilitating fear. Christ stands with us and says 'Peace be with you.'

Whatever life is like for you right now, Jesus comes and stands in it with you, bringing his peace. And as he stands with his friends Jesus does a striking thing - he shows his wounds 'Look at my hands and feet' he says.

He uses his wounds to remind the disciples and us of the power of the cross - to build us up, to grow our faith, to settle our fears.

The resurrection doesn't erase the pain of the cross. The hope of God, the joy of the resurrection is found in the wounds and scars we carry. Life's wounds enrich and speak

into our moments of joy and vice versa, they are inseparable. Showing his wounds, Christ reminds us that in all things God is at work for good.

And so as this pandemic begins to give way to hope and relief, let's not forget the wounds of lockdown and this awful virus. Instead, we can look to see Jesus standing amongst us showing us *his* wounds, reminding us of the power of the cross and the hope of new life growing in those wounds.

In the cross, God's indestructible love, carried on the back of Jesus, stands with us in the messiness of life.

One of my favourite verses of this passage from Luke's gospel is verse 41. I think it would have made a great photo. Saint Luke tells us 'While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, Christ said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?'' You can imagine the disciples sitting open mouthed with a bewildered look on their faces, whilst Jesus asks - have you got anything to eat?

Not only does Jesus meet us in the messiness, he meets us in the ordinary. And there's nothing more ordinary than a simple bit of broiled fish.

I love this because it says to me that following Christ is about the simple every day things we do for him - the food we provide, the care we give, the hospitality we share, the short prayers we say.

Our faith **can** be expressed in grand ideas, projects or services, but it is more often expressed in the ordinary things we do for Jesus each and every day.

This week, my wife who is the Vicar of St Paul's Luton, received a text from Jo one of her clergy colleagues in Luton. Jo does a great deal of brilliant work supporting refugees in Luton and she was messaging to let Kate know that a family of refugees had moved into a flat opposite St Paul's and that they had barely anything. Mattresses on the floor and little else.

Kate said to Jo that she would visit the family and provide support and help. Kate messaged the church family and the neighbours in our cul de sac asking for things for the kitchen, bed linen, towels, clothes etc.

We were overwhelmed with the kindness of everyone - all sorts of things - it filled 2 cars.

As you can imagine, the family were thrilled - and relieved. Kate texted Jo to say what help had been given and Jo replied with these words - which I'll never forget: 'Who knew that God's love is shaped like potato peelers and saucepans.'



Christ meets us in the ordinary and asks us to serve him in the ordinary. 'Have you anything to eat?'

As we emerge from lockdown and the pandemic, how will we help share God's love like potato peelers and saucepans, or shape God's love like the food, resources, care, hospitality, support and conversations needed in your family, on your street, in your church, or in your community?

As a church how will you be open to listening for the question or instruction of Christ to give you a purpose in the simple every day things? And if Jesus were to ask you what you have to offer as a church in way of food or sustenance for the people he has called you to serve, what would be your reply?

What do you have? Remember it doesn't need to be grand, all singing and dancing, it doesn't need to be an original idea or something that will go viral.

It just needs to be as simple as broiled fish. Ordinary, because Christ meets us in the ordinary.

So in the messiness of a world emerging from a pandemic look for Jesus standing among us greeting us with peace, showing us his wounds, reminding us of the power of the cross - As the writer of that old hymn puts it 'the cross is our hope that towers over the wrecks of time'.

And be ready to receive the question or instruction of Jesus that will prompt us to serve him in the ordinary. Amen.

## Prayers

### Collect for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter

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.

### **Prayers for others and for ourselves**

#### **Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you."**

Lord God, we pray for those who are not at peace. For people and nations at war and for those who need reconciliation to one another. We pray for freedom from conflict, discord and dispute.

#### **Lord in your mercy...**

#### **Jesus said to them, "Why are you troubled"**

Lord God, we pray for those who are troubled. For people with many doubts or uncertainties and those who desire confidence and trust. We pray for freedom from anxiety, rejection and fear.

#### **Lord in your mercy...**

#### **Jesus asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?"**

Lord God, we pray for those without food. For people who are hungry or starving and for those who desperately need aid. We pray for freedom from injustice, inequality and negligence.

**Creator God we pray for those who are in need** and ask you to look with pity on those who suffer and those who are ill. We especially pray for all those who have asked for our prayers.....

We pray for the broken-hearted, for the sick, and for the lonely, that your very presence would comfort them in their time of need. We give thanks for all who work in the health services.

**Merciful God, we pray that those who have recently died** may one day share in the promise of new life won for us all by the resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ and his triumph over death and the grave.

Living God,  
your Son made himself known to his disciples  
in the breaking of bread:

open the eyes of our faith,  
that we may see him in all his redeeming work;  
who is alive and reigns, now and for ever. AMEN.

### Parish Prayers for the week ahead

#### In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer:

Sunday	The Church of Ireland
Monday	The Diocese of Boga – Province of the Anglican Church of The Congo
Tuesday	The Diocese of Bolivia – The Anglican Church of South America
Wednesday	The Diocese of Bondo – The Anglican Church of Kenya
Thursday	The Diocese of Bor – The Province of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan
Friday	The Diocese of Botswana – The Church of the Province of Central Africa
Saturday	The Diocese of Brandon – The Anglican Church of Canada

#### In our Diocesan Cycle of Prayer:

Sunday	Parish of Wrestlingworth (Deanery of Biggleswade)
Monday	Parish of Albury (Deanery of Bishop's Stortford)
Tuesday	Parish of Bishop's Stortford (Deanery of Bishop's Stortford)
Wednesday	Parish of Bishop's Stortford, Holy Trinity (Deanery of Bishop's Stortford)
Thursday	Parish of Braughing (Deanery of Bishop's Stortford)
Friday	Parish of Furneux Pelham (Deanery of Bishop's Stortford)
Saturday	Parish of Gilston with Eastwick (Deanery of Bishop's Stortford)

#### For the homes and families in:

Sunday	St John's Road, St Michael's Close
Monday	St Paul's Close, Sandhurst Court
Tuesday	Sherwoods Rise, Sibley Avenue
Wednesday	Southdown Road, Stonehurst Court
Thursday	Tarrant Drive. Tiverton Court,
Friday	Topstreet Way, The Uplands
Saturday	Vallance Place, Walkers Court

#### The Sick:

Amy, Claire, Sue, Christine, Hermione, Karen, Chris and all whose names are entered on our St Luke's Cell Prayer List.

### **For the recently deceased:**

Pamela Richardson

### **On their year's mind:**

John Clansey, Leslie Allen, Kathleen Stroyan, Charlotte Swinscoe, Marjorie Hoskin, Robert Andrews, Barbara Mitchell, Barbara Saban

## **A roadmap for easing lockdown restrictions**

Notes:

- It is accepted that these proposals will need to be reviewed from time to time in the light of revised regulations and advice both from the Government and from the Diocese.
- The chance is being taken to think afresh about our 'permanent' service pattern.

### **Praying for the future of St Johns**

- A weekly gathering to pray informally on Wednesdays at 5.30pm (30 mins max); to be held in the Lady Chapel starting on **7 April**.

### **Resumption of other services / in Church congregation**

- Evening Prayer on Wednesdays at 5.00pm from **7 April**.
- Sunday 9.30am Parish Eucharist:
  - PCC (and immediate family) invited on **25 April** (commissioning of PCC).
  - All invited on **2 May**.

### **Church opening**

- Saturday opening (in addition to Sunday) from **10 April** (11.00am - 4.00pm).

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### **A reminder... of this phone service:**

**Daily Hope** – dial 0800 804 8044 for prayer, reflection, music and worship services from the Church of England. A weekly service is available from 9 am every Sunday.

