



Martin Bird's Prayers for Easter Week

Monday 5th – Sunday 11th April

Monday of Easter Week

Reading – Matthew Chapter 28, verses 8 to 15

So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me." While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

Lord Jesus, we see in this reading two sides to the day of resurrection. We see your disciples clasping your feet and worshipping you, overjoyed to see you alive once more, your resurrection assured. Then we see the authorities hearing that you have been resurrected, and going into overdrive to put out any story that will stop believing in you. Help us to always be like your disciples and worship you and be overjoyed at your resurrection, and, no matter how many times we read the story of your resurrection, may we always read it with awe and wonder, knowing that you died and are risen again. Thank you Lord Jesus, for going through all that you did, just for us. Amen

Tuesday of Easter Week

Reading – 1 Corinthians 15, verses 1 to 11

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

Lord God, thank you for Paul. Thank you that in today's reading he is at such pains to show the Corinthians, and us, that you really are raised from the dead. By telling them, and us, just how many people you appeared to, he is saying that your resurrection is real! Help us to know this afresh today and everyday – and may everyday of our lives be lived in worship to your Son Jesus, our Risen Lord and Saviour. Amen

Wednesday of Easter Week

Reading – Luke Chapter 24, verses 13 to 35

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. 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?" "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. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 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. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus." He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. 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. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. 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?" They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Lord Jesus, we can't begin to know just how amazing it would have felt for these two disciples to have you talk them through the Scriptures concerning yourself but we know that it tells us in today's reading that their hearts were burning within them as they spoke. As we read this Scripture today, and whenever we read the scripture, may our hearts burn within us too, knowing that what we are reading is from you and your Father and our Father, God. May we always recognise you at work in our lives, and when we do, may we feel that joy, awe and wonder that these two disciples felt on that road to Emmaus as you spoke to them. Thank you Lord Jesus for your presence in our lives – now may we live for you, our Risen Messiah. Amen

Thursday of Easter Week

Reading – Luke Chapter 24, verses 35 to 48

Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread. While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence. He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

Lord Jesus, you appeared to your disciples and said, “Peace be with you”. May we know that peace in our lives at this time when peace seems so far away for so many. Thank you that you explained things to your disciples and, because of that, to us also. We see you alive and well with your friends, and we know that what was written has come to pass. You did die, you are Risen!
Amen

Friday of Easter Week

Reading – John Chapter 21, verses 1 to 14

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. “I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?” “No,” they answered. He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread. Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.” So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Lord Jesus, help us to be like Peter in our lives, and be so excited by you that nothing will stop us coming to you and living for you. Just as Peter jumped off his boat, so may we jump off the boats we have made for ourselves, and come to you, excited like a small child, glad to know you are there, delighted and joyful that you are risen and you have saved us. As we eat, may we know that we are also eating with you and that you are always there for us – our Risen Lord and Saviour, our pathway to the one true God. Amen

Saturday of Easter Week

Reading – 1 Corinthians Chapter 15, verses 51 to the end

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed - in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.

Lord Jesus, because you are risen from death, we can now say, as Paul did, death where is your sting, and where is your victory? Thank you, Jesus our Messiah, that you have given us the victory through your resurrection. Help us now, as Paul has told us, to give ourselves fully to your work O Lord, because we know that any work we do for you is not in vain. You are our Rock, our Redeemer and our Saviour, the Risen Lord Jesus, Amen

2nd Sunday of Easter

Reading – John Chapter 20, verses 19 to the end

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!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 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." 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!" 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." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 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.

Lord Jesus, when we read this scripture, we see two different reactions. The first time you appear, the disciples are overjoyed to see you and it is wonderful. When Thomas hears that you appeared, his reaction is a reasonable one – I can't believe it and I need to see it for myself. Then you reappear and he says, "My Lord and my God!". Then you say that wonderful thing – blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe. Lord, may we be so blessed. We have not seen you in the flesh, but we do believe. Jesus, you died, and you are risen, resurrected for us all. We believe, Lord Jesus, we believe! Amen