

**Winchester, Eastleigh, and Romsey Circuit
Service at Home 24th April 2022**

prepared by Pamela Gilbert

Opening Prayer: StF 30 v 1 & 2

Jesus, stand among us
at the meeting of our lives,
be our sweet agreement
at the meeting of our eyes.
O Jesus, we love you, so we gather here,
Join our hearts in unity and take away our fear.

So to you we're gathering
Out of each and every land,
Christ the love between us
At the joining of our hands.
O Jesus, we love you, so we gather here,
Join our hearts in unity and take away our fear.

Graham Kendrick b 1950

Prayer of Praise and Thanksgiving

Living God, always making new, the resurrection of Jesus challenges us. We admit that, like Thomas, we find it hard to believe. We do! We do! It's not that we don't want to but it is so amazing – can it be true? Thank you for all those who have believed, trusted, obeyed and given their lives. Thank you for the Church, born of the message, bearer of the message. Amen.

Listen, read, pray, or sing along StF 455

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3LCGh02Vew>

All my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew.
Me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown, he alone
calls my heart to be his own.

Human pride and earthly glory,
Sword and crown betray our trust;
what with care and toil we fashion,
tower and temple, fall to dust.
But God's power, hour by hour,
Is my temple and my tower.

God's great goodness aye endureth,
Deep his wisdom passing thought;
splendour, light and life attend him,
beauty springeth out of nought.
Evermore from his store
New-born worlds rise and adore.

Daily doth the almighty giver
Bounteous gifts on us bestow;
his desire our soul delighteth,
pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand at his hand;
joy doth wait on his command.

Still from earth to God eternal
Sacrifice of praise be done,
High above all praises praising
For the gift of Christ his Son.
Christ doth call one and all
Ye who follow shall not fail.

Robert Bridges (1844-1930) alt
Based on Joachim Neander (1650-1680)

Readings: Acts 5 v 27-32 John 20 v 19-31

Listen, read, pray, or sing along StF 439

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGq1RRzb3-4>

Abba Father, let me be yours and yours alone.
May my will forever be ever more your own.
Never let my heart grow cold, never let me go,
Abba Father, let me be yours and yours alone.

Dave Bilborough (b 1965)

Sermon

One of the challenges of preaching on the Second Sunday of Easter is that the Gospel is the same in all three years of the Common Lectionary and indeed also in the one-year historic lectionary. There is no getting around John.

However, the Holy Spirit in his wisdom inspired John to record three separate focal points in these twelve verses. John 20: v 19 – 31 focuses upon the Easter evening appearance of Jesus to ten of his disciples in the upper room - while

verses 24 – 29 focus on events a week later when Jesus appears to the Disciples a second time, this time with Thomas in attendance. The final two verses provide a commentary by the evangelist as to the reason Scripture is recorded - namely, that we may believe and by believing have life.

In today's world, we can set our alarms, ask for the weather forecast, ask Siri to call our mothers. The human voice has new power! We can talk to our devices and they carry out our requests - or at least that's how it is supposed to work. Just a few years ago this was science fiction. It was a time when information went into a computer via punch cards. Now we can talk to the computer, dictate to our word processing programmes, surf the internet without touching the keyboard. During the time of COVID 19 our voices were even more important, especially to the person who was isolating and alone. A friendly phone call could make all the difference to their day.

Easter is, among other things, about the power of the voice. On this second Sunday of Easter, the risen Lord Jesus comes to you and to me, to speak his peace into our hearts so that we may speak that peace to the world. We read in today's Gospel that after Mary and the other women told Jesus' disciples they had seen the Lord, the disciples did not really believe. By the evening of the day, the disciples were behind locked doors, afraid of being found. Are we, as a Church, huddled together, letting fear rather than Faith control our every thought and action?

Suddenly, Jesus comes and stands among them. John says the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. But in their joy, not one of them apologises for their behaviour over the last few days. No one says sorry, or said they could have done better. They were not able to say anything. It's Jesus who speaks the first words. Just as was the case at the sound of God's voice in creation, the sound of Jesus' voice creates something wonderful and new, **"Peace be with you,"** he says

(v19). This is not a wish or a hope. It is his gift to them. "Peace be with you", he says and there is peace and joy. Only now, did the disciples begin to realise the whole point of what Jesus had been through. Jesus' death on the cross was to re-establish the peace between God and man that had been shattered when we first sinned. Sin will always stand as separation, as conflict, between two parties. In sin, we live for ourselves, not for others. In sin, we can never be with God because his holiness cannot be a relationship with unholiness. By taking our sin to the cross, Christ removed the separation and reconciled us to God, bringing us back into peace with him.

The whole scene repeats a week later, when Thomas is with the disciples at last. The doors are locked but Jesus comes again. He speaks the same words 'Peace Be with You'. Rather than scolding, Jesus encourages Thomas to touch and see the wounds, then says. **"Do not disbelieve, but believe"** (v 27). Two thousand years have passed since the first Easter evening. Our churches may still struggle to come out from behind locked doors and into the world. While we may not fear suffering the same cruelty as Jesus suffered on the cross, there is much to be wary of in 2022 - as there was in the first century. During the pandemic, we were told to lock ourselves away in our homes. Unable to meet, worship changed to being online or in print. There may be a temptation to focus all our attention on our fears. This text from John 20, is not about how the world locks its doors to the Gospel but how the Church locks itself away from the world.

Jesus said, **"Do not be afraid"**, the grave could not keep him in the ground. As the disciples were gathered, he came and stood amongst them and spoke his word, "Peace be with you". This is Jesus' word to all of us on this second Sunday of Easter. **"Peace be with you"; "Peace, your sins are forgiven!"** "Do not fear the world. I have overcome the world. Peace be with you!

These words come to us today with exactly the same power as they came to those first disciples on the first Easter and to Thomas a week later.

“These (words) are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have eternal life in his name.” (v 31). In his word, Jesus comes among us today. We can experience the power of his voice. He doesn’t just tell us about peace, he actually speaks peace to you and to me. As Luther puts it, “As soon as he said it, it was done”.

Jesus spoke his peace to us in the water of our Baptism, every time we return in repentance to our Baptism and through our minister who says, “I forgive you all your sins”. That peace is spoken to us at his table when sharing the bread and wine. He comes through space and time to forgive our sins and to lift us from our fears. There his voice speaks peace, “This is for you, he says, **“for the forgiveness of sins”**”.

We rise from the table at peace, ready to go into the world. **“As the Father has sent, even so I am sending you”**. (v 21)

God sends out into the world, but we do not go empty handed. He breathed his Holy Spirit upon his disciples. To his Church, he hands the keys to the kingdom of heaven. **“If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is “Peace be with you” AMEN**

Listen, read, pray, or sing along StF 710

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lj9A4klqbqY>

Peace, perfect peace, is the gift of Christ our Lord.
Peace, perfect peace, is the gift of Christ our Lord.
Thus, says the Lord, will the world know my
friends.

Peace, perfect peace, is the gift of Christ our Lord.

Love, perfect love, is the gift of Christ our Lord.
Love, perfect love, is the gift of Christ our Lord.
Thus, says the Lord, will the world know my
friends.

Love, perfect love, is the gift of Christ our Lord.

Faith, perfect faith, is the gift of Christ our Lord.
Faith, perfect faith, is the gift of Christ our Lord.
Thus, says the Lord, will the world know my
friends.

Faith, perfect faith, is the gift of Christ our Lord.

Hope, perfect hope, is the gift of Christ our Lord.
Hope, perfect hope, is the gift of Christ our Lord.
Thus, says the Lord, will the world know my
friends.

Hope, perfect hope, is the gift of Christ our Lord.

Joy, perfect joy, is the gift of Christ our Lord.
Joy, perfect joy, is the gift of Christ our Lord.
Thus, says the Lord, will the world know my
friends.

Joy, perfect joy, is the gift of Christ our Lord.

Kevin Mayhew (b. 1942)

Prayers of Intercession

Pray for the world – bringing to mind those particular situations that are a special concern for you today.

Pray for the Church – for your own church; for our Circuit; for Orthodox Christians as they celebrate Easter this Sunday.

Pray for individuals you know who are in special need at this time – because of illness, anxiety, or bereavement.

Pray for yourself . . . and offer your various gifts

Thank you, Lord, for listening to our prayers.
Amen

The Lord’s Prayer

Listen, read, pray, or sing along StF 673

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-Bq1YtpQL8>

Will you come and follow me
If I but call your name?
Will you go where you don’t know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown
in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer
in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see
if I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free
and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean,
and do such as this unseen,
and admit to what I mean
in you and you in me?

Will you love the 'you' you hide
if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound
in you and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me.

John L Bell (b 1949) & Graham Maule (b.1958)

Blessing

O Saviour Christ, borne in the tomb, be born in us
and pray in us the prayers of peace for the
remembered past, the prayers of trust for the
baffling present, and the prayers of hope for the
unknown future. This is our prayer for your
Kingdom's sake. **Amen**