

Peace be unto your home and all who dwell in it

Alleluia, Christ is Risen!
He is Risen indeed Alleluia.

Introduction

by Don and Ro Rodgers
Based on Proverbs 3; 5-6

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight
In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your path.”

Like air traffic controllers who see the ‘big picture’ and have knowledge and authority to help and navigate pilots through the storm or change route, God ensures that everything that needs to happen, happens at the right time and the right speed to arrive safely at the destination He has planned for you.

Stay in communication with God
He will navigate you through the ups and downs of life
and through cloudy or foggy days
when you can't see the next step you need to take.
Seek His will in all you do and He will show you the path to take.
He will be with you every step of the way.

Hymn

All my hope on God is founded

<https://youtu.be/W3LCGh02Vew>

Thanksgiving and confession

Loving Father

We thank you that you are a God
who teaches us about yourself,
about how you love us
and how you want the best for us

We thank you for the many ways we hear your voice today,
through the scriptures, the world around us
the people we meet;
through prayer and reflection
through the experiences of life
and through our daily walk with you.

Speak to us now and give us ears to hear

Loving Father

We thank you that day by day you speak to us.
Help us to be open to what you say,
Ready to receive your instructions
And accept your guidance

Save us from closing our ears
to that which we do not want to hear;
from becoming so fixed in our ways and opinions
that we become spiritually deaf;
from limiting our word or denying your call
by our unwillingness to listen

Speak to us now and give us ears to hear
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

May our loving God who makes all things new,
fill us now with new faith,
new commitment, new purpose and new life,
through the power of the risen Christ. Amen
Alleluia, Christ is Risen!
He is Risen indeed Alleluia.

Collect for the 6th Sunday of Easter

Risen Christ
By the lakeside you renewed
your call to your friends
help your Church obey your command
and draw the nations
to the fire of your love
to the glory of God the Father. Amen

First Reading

Setting the scene

In last week's service we heard of the martyrdom of St Stephen. A man named Saul was there, a man who violently opposed the spread of the Christian faith, and indeed, even held the coats of the men who stoned Stephen to death. Saul was determined to persecute the followers of Jesus and set off for Damascus to persecute the Christians there. On the road to Damascus Saul had a dramatic experience, meeting the risen Jesus, and it led him to a deep and abiding faith. It also led to him changing his name to Paul. Listening to God's will for him Paul travelled around the Mediterranean telling people of the wonder of God's love and how Jesus died and was resurrected from the death. In today's reading he has arrived in Athens and had begun to tell the story of Jesus to the people there, sceptical but interested his listeners took him to the Aeropagus, which was heart of culture, learning and religion in Athens and also the seat of the High Court. and took its name from the rock of Ares [one of the Greek gods] read on...

Acts 17; 22-31

²² Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So, you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

²⁴ “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. ²⁶ From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. ²⁷ God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. ²⁸ ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’

²⁹ “Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. ³⁰ In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”

Hymn

We have a Gospel to proclaim

https://youtu.be/_ozcqFS3qlo

Gospel Reading

Setting the scene

Just before this chapter in John's Gospel we have seen Jesus wash disciples' feet before they ate the Passover together, and heard him reveal that he is to be betrayed by one of them. He also gives a new commandment to his confused followers, telling them to love one another as he has loved them. At the beginning of the 14th chapter Jesus reassures them that they will be all together in the end, as his Father's house has many rooms and he will come back to take them home with him. They are concerned and puzzled by his words and he continues by telling them that he will send a helper as we see in this passage.

John 14; 15-20

¹⁵ "If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."

Reflection

The disciples were certainly in communication with Jesus. They kept questioning him, asking him why, when, where, who, what and how? And he kept answering them – but not with the answers they wanted. So, they asked again. Throughout the gospels there are moments when Jesus must have felt exasperated. He's spent three years explaining that no one is better than you but then you're not better than anyone else and the fact that God loves you gives you worth beyond measure.

He's told them that the Kingdom of God is coming – and tells them what it is going to be like in the sermon on the mount. And still, not only their questions but their behaviour shows they haven't taken anything in. How can this new kingdom be full of paupers and scruffs, the sick and the weak?

They argue about who is going to be on the right and left of Jesus in the new kingdom [thinking of the most senior advisors to the King] When he speaks about his death they try and hush him up – defeatist talk!

Even when he washes their feet, they are uncomfortable at this reversal of roles, embarrassed that their leader should behave like a slave. How can you follow a man like that? Kings boss people about – usually via an intermediary. It's worth being a friend to a king because the intermediaries have the opportunity for power and wealth.

Yes, there was plenty of communication going on between Jesus and his disciples but not much understanding. The conversations seemed to be completely at cross purposes.

In the passage that we've just read, from John's Gospel, it's perfectly clear that Jesus knows full well that his words aren't making sense to his friends. At this point there is nothing that Jesus can do. So, he makes them a promise that this spirit of truth will come to them anyway – and then they will recognize exactly what he has been trying to tell them. God's way is not our way, God's Kingdom is not like our kingdoms. In time they will understand.

There is almost a sense of very human desperation in his words as he tells them how much he loves them and how much they are loved by God -- that the only thing that matters is that they should love too.

It's a message that he is desperate to share with us today. The message that God loves us, just for ourselves. God is trying to tell us that every day – when we do

hear him the effect is revolutionary. The world begins to change, iota by iota, piece by piece as we begin to use God's values to assess the world. We suddenly see how unfair and unreasonably people are treated and what needs to change. We see the person behind the job, behind the uniform, behind the face they put on to hide from the world.

And if we listen hard, we hear that it is not through huge movements, and great political upheaval, or powerful organisations crushing opposition that God's kingdom comes about. It comes about because I love, and you love, people, all people. We love them because they are all worth loving, just for themselves in fact just as God loves us. When you love someone, you care deeply about their happiness, their comfort, their well-being, their life and when we care about all those things for all people, the world begins to change.

God has not given us a spirit of running other people's lives and telling them what is good for them. God has given us a Spirit of truth, which shows us how we can honestly help people to know his love, and let him, through that Spirit, transform their lives with his help.

And if that seems just impossible – remember what Don and Ro said at the beginning of this service - God knows exactly what you need to do and how. If you allow him to communicate his ideas to you – through scripture, through the voice of a friend, the words in a poem, or that voice that you can sometimes hear in your head when there is perfect peace and calm – then you will be on the right path – the path which takes us to the Kingdom of God. And in his Kingdom we can all be the people God made us to be. Joyful, lifeful, loveful, and radiant with grace.

Hymn

A new commandment I give unto you

https://youtu.be/D4P5ILde_og

An Eastertide Creed

Though he was divine,
he did not cling to equality with God
but made himself nothing.
Taking the form of a slave
he was born in human likeness.
He humbled himself and was obedient to death
Even death on the cross.
Therefore, God has raised him on high,
And given him the name above every name;
That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow
And every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord
To the glory of God, the Father. Amen.

[cf Philippians 2; 6-11]

Hymn

It is a thing most wonderful

https://youtu.be/C8ImUe_UxHQ

Intercessions

Prepared for us by Maureen Noye

Gracious Father how sad it is that our church family cannot be together to praise and worship you in church but how lucky we are that as a result of the caring skill and dedication of our minister Vera and her team we are able to be as one each and every day as we take comfort in the daily thought and prayers they provide for us.

Lord we thank You for blessing us with such a wonderful world. This Spring season is just so beautiful. The trees in their full livery of new leaves and blossom, the flowers opening up into their full beauty and what can be more delightful than seeing all the baby animals being born and marvelling at how, within minutes of birth, they are on their little legs and suckling from their mothers. What joy !!

Sadly, Father within this new life there is also death.

Our hearts are saddened each day by the latest death toll from this horrendous virus

We give our thanks to all those caring and fighting for those who have fallen victims to it.

We pray for all those suffering from other diseases, those who are awaiting the results of medical testing and for their families who wait with them

Father, we bring before you all that are in need at this time, you understand the fears that beset us; the anxieties that fill our dreams; the worries that we face day to day. Help us to pray for all those around us who are also suffering, we remember especially

Alex, Anne & Geoff, Catherine, Derek & Val, Eileen, Frances, Harriet, Jacky, Matthew and Lucy, Michelle, Peter,

Val Adams, Jake Agnew, Elizabeth Bailey & family; Ken Baker, Peter Black, Robert Bloomfield, Nonnie Bridge, Doreen Clarke, David Kloose [Close], Guy Coxeter, Jimmy Cromar, Beryl Dabson, Peter Dickinson, Barry Dowsett, Jean Foster, Tom & Kylie Freeman & Family, Doreen Gilbert, Gillian Grafham, Eddie Gordon, Richard Green, Kaye Head, Kath House, Stephen Johnson, Hayden Keeling, Colin Lister,

Rene M, Claire and Andrew MacLeod, Rhys Maples, David McNeill, Carole Noble, Harriet Pearson, Cecilia Phelps, Dave Phillips, Robert Price, Doug Watson, Ruth

Wells and the family and friends of the late, Joe Dalzell, John Bugg, Jim Melhuish, Stanley Grindley, and Richard Littaur

And we pray that those who have lost their loved ones, and were unable to be with them in their final hours, rest in the knowledge that You were there to gather them into Your loving arms and guide them into your house safe in the knowledge that one day they will be together again.

Father we give You thanks for all the key workers who are selflessly serving our needs and to the thousands of volunteers who are giving such wonderful support to the elderly and vulnerable. You have given people the power of caring and for that we are truly grateful.

We offer our prayers for our Royal family and pray they keep safe and we pray for our government. We pray You give them the strength, knowledge and tenacity to make the right decisions to get us through the coming months.

Finally Father we pray for ourselves. We pray that You will reach out and hold us and fill us with Your love.

We pray that whatever we must face this coming week and whoever we must face it with we may be assured by Your presence and power

Merciful Father,
accept these prayers
for the sake of your son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

We bring our prayers to an end with the words Jesus has taught us

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Closing Prayer

All through this day, O Lord,
May I touch as many lives as you would have me touch
That you may inspire them with your Holy Spirit
Whether by the word I speak, the email I write,
The prayer I breathe or the life I live
(anon)

Farewell

Lord Jesus Christ

You are the peace of all things calm
You are the place to hide from harm
You are the light that shines in dark
You are the heart's eternal spark
You are the door that's open wide
You are the guest who waits inside
You are the stranger at the door
You are the calling of the poor
You are my Lord and with me still
You are my love, keep me from ill
You are the light, the truth, the way
You are my Saviour this very day.

Amen

Closing hymn

I the lord of sea and sky

<https://youtu.be/6grXk3e5bs0>

The Lord bless us and keep us
The Lord make his face to shine upon us
The Lord give us his strength, his joy and his peace
and support and sustain all those we love and pray for
This day and evermore. Amen

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