



Living churches at the heart of their communities...

St Giles', Durham, St Cuthbert's, Shadforth and St Mary's, Sherburn

**Sunday 18 April 2021
Readings and Notices
Easter 3**

Collect

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



Bible Readings

Acts 3. 12-19

When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, "You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.

'And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out.

1 John 3. 1-7

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

Luke 24. 36b-48

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.

Post Communion Prayer

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

Reflection

Luke 24: 36b-48

Easter is always a very special time in the life of the Church: the disciplines of Lent and the devotions of Holy Week give way to joyful celebration; there is colour in flowers and vestments; there is a lighter tone in the language of liturgy, and in more usual times, a shift in the traditions of music. And it all happens as the days get longer, the sun a little warmer and there are signs of new life and growth in the gardens and open spaces around us. We are readily and rightly caught up in the excitement of this special time of the year.



But after a week or two, as we come down from the heady heights of celebration, we need to take a look at what has really happened, perhaps reflect on what this season in the life of the Church is all about.

We are blessed in knowing how the Easter narrative unfolds – what comes next in the story. But the disciples were bereft, without our benefits of hindsight. They too, were struggling to make sense of what had happened. They were trying to process the roller-coaster of events played out between the triumphant procession into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday when Jesus was greeted as the Messiah and Saviour of his people, the challenging words and actions of the Last Supper at the feast of Passover, the devastating betrayal of Jesus by one of their own, the brutality of his trial, the horror of his Crucifixion, and then the astonishing revelations of his rising on Easter Day.

But, Jesus was with his disciples through it all, in the confusion of doubts, hopes and fears. He had endless patience with them, and limitless love for them, as they struggled to come to terms with the events of the Easter story.

They remained hidden in the Upper Room, afraid to leave and not knowing what to believe or think or do. And it is here that Jesus came to them. He came to reassure them, asking, "Why do questionings rise in your hearts?" He challenged them with this new reality but, nonetheless, calmed their fears, as he showed them his wounds, shared their food, and reminded them of his promises to them. He went back over the scriptures to help them understand what had happened and why. He reaffirmed that, "the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations".

They had heard it all before, just as we have, but they needed to hear it again, just as we do. Jesus reminded them, as he reminds us, "You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you."

We long for those same reassurances, that all we have learned of him is true.

But, just as the disciples could not stay locked away in that Upper Room, we can't remain lost in the reveries of joyous celebration, however exciting it is to be back in church together. We must trust that Jesus is with us, that his word is true and that the work he commissioned to us is ready and waiting.

How wonderful it is to know that we, too, are witnesses to these things; that we, too, are asked to spread the gospel of repentance and forgiveness; that we are called to live the new life of resurrection. That is the Easter message and despite our moments of uncertainty or confusion, we rejoice to say, "Jesus Christ is risen, Alleluia!", because we are witnesses of these things.

Rowena Ashworth

Notices

An announcement from the Church Commissioners:

"A Notice giving the objects of proposed pastoral reorganisation affecting our parishes has or will be displayed near the main door and on the Church of England website. This Notice includes the last date by which representations regarding the proposed reorganisation may be made to the Church Commissioners."

The Notice principally relates to the union of the benefice of Saint Giles, Durham and the benefice of Shadforth and Sherburn. The Notice is available to read in full on the Church of England website at www.churchofengland.org/consultation and we will also arrange for printed copies to be available for those who would like one.

APCMs for all three of our churches will take place on **Sunday 25 April**. St Giles will be in church after the morning service and will be Zoomed for those unable to attend; St Cuthbert's and St Mary's will be at 4.00pm via Zoom only.

Keyholders: please remember to let Sarah know of any keys you hold. You can either ring her in the office: 0191 374 1079 or email stgileschurchdurham@live.co.uk to let her know which keys you have. Thank you

Readings for next week – Easter 4:

Acts 4. 9-12; Psalm 23; 1 John 3. 16-end; John 10. 11-18