

Easter 2.

Readings Psalm 33 John 20 v 19-31 and 1
John 1 -2 v 2

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you'.

There have been lots of disappointments expressed about the last year. Especially from younger generations. There is the very real fear for the future- job prospects, environment, health.

The empty tomb is a source of disappointment and fear for some of the disciples, which means that they not only gather together in a locked house but remain there. We expect the empty tomb to be an immediate point of transformation. The fact is that Jesus is not there. However, the story is that the disciples still live with fear. This is understandable having seen such a horrendous death. The disciples take time to process the facts. The Resurrection takes time to work in the reality of their lives.

It is twice behind these locked doors that Jesus appears and speaks words of peace.
Peace be with you.

(In other gospels the disciples receive the Holy Spirit after Jesus' ascension. Here in John's gospel, the Holy Spirit is given in a private space when Jesus was still on earth. Jesus breathes on them and sends the disciples out to make peace and to forgive sins through the power of the Holy Spirit.)

This peace even amidst fear enables them to offer their lives to God again. Jesus offers himself to Thomas in all his wounding and doubt. Thomas responds 'My Lord and my God'. Thomas offers his life to God and takes the news of the Resurrection to India, eventually dying a martyr's death.

I am encouraged that the gospel of John portrays the disciples as human. Jesus meets them twice behind the same locked doors. Jesus meets Thomas in his doubts. He does not judge. He is there. Jesus offers the disciples what they need to sustain them – is intimate breathe of spiritual life- and peace.

I wonder what you need to live the fulness of the Resurrection life? Bring your response to God in prayer. Can you also bring your fears to our God who knows our pain and heals our wounds? Can you bring the parts of your disappointments or parts of life that feel stuck? Can you be honest about your doubts and know Christ meets you in them?

The gift of the Resurrection is that Christ meets us where we are, in all that we are. Living the Resurrection story takes time. It is the long work of God's Holy Spirit. Easter is just the beginning!

May the risen Christ breathe peace and hope into us as we offer ourselves, to be peace makers and hope givers.

Revd Becky

An evening prayer from the church of South India
**O God our Father, by your mercy and might
the world turns safely into darkness and returns again to light:
We give into your hands our unfinished tasks,
our unsolved problems, and our unfulfilled hopes,
knowing that only that what you bless will prosper.
To your great love and protection
we commit each other and all those we love,
knowing that you alone are our sure defender;
through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**



HYMN REFLECTION FOR EASTER by Malcolm Sturgess

A few weeks ago I was listening to a conversation on Radio 5 Live between Nihal, the regular host, and a pop musician called David Grey. It was fascinating. Grey said you can't go on doing everything the same; "you can't use last year's song this year; you must find a new path to the waterfall". What a lovely metaphor! I fell to wondering where the boundary is between "church music" and other music. It could be somewhere under the hat of Stuart Townend, that hat which he wears all the time, even in church.

There are twelve hymns in the New A & M by Townend and his collaborator, Keith Getty. Both men are listed as both authors and composers; there is a lot about them and by them on the Internet. One of their hymns is the Easter hymn, *See what a morning, gloriously bright*. Pop music or church music? In public performances, Townend has a music group, banging out every beat on drums and cymbals like the worst pop: terrible, to *my* ears.

In my opinion, the words tend to be a string of holy clichés, sung with a pseudo-American accent. No polished sentences like David Grey. **BUT** There can be absolutely no doubting their Christian sincerity or their learning; Getty's hero is Martin Luther. Their tunes are eminently singable, pitched low so everybody can join in. Unlike most pop music, they sound alright on the organ. Getty often uses silence on the first beat of the bar, which should be the strong beat, a silence which propels the line through the other beats to the next bar. And these Townend/Getty hymns are undoubtedly popular. *In Christ alone* was voted amongst the best-loved hymns of all time on *Songs of Praise* and elsewhere in the 2010's. They are great to sing, even if afterwards you think, "what was that all about?" I would recommend them, without the percussion.

**See, what a morning, gloriously bright,
with the dawning of hope in Jerusalem;
folded the grave clothes, tomb filled with light
as the angels announce Christ is risen!
See God's salvation plan, wrought in love, borne in pain, paid in sacrifice,
fulfilled in Christ the man, for he lives; Christ is risen from the dead!**

**See Mary weeping, "Where is he laid?"
as in sorrow she turns from the empty tomb;
hears a voice speaking, calling her name;
it's the Master, the Lord raised to life again!
The voice that spans the years, speaking life, stirring hope, bringing peace to us,
will sound till he appears, for he lives; Christ is risen from the dead!**

**One with the Father, Ancient of Days,
through the Spirit who clothes faith with certainty;
honour and blessing, glory and praise
to the King crowned with power and authority!
And we are raised with him, death is dead, love has won, Christ has conquered;
and we shall reign with him, for he lives; Christ is risen from the dead!**

There are some beautiful and uplifting Stuart Townend hymns which are based on Biblical themes and parables- one which was played at our outdoor Easter morning service. Listen on <https://www.stuarttownend.co.uk/song/vagabonds/>

Or for more of his music please visit <https://www.stuarttownend.co.uk/>

Revd Becky