

Worship at Home
May 1, 2022
3rd Sunday of Easter

God calls us to worship:

(Congregational response in bold type)

The Lord is risen!

He is risen indeed!

Psalm 30:1-5, 11-12

Hymn: #251 “Christ is alive”

We offer our prayers:

Prayer of Praise and Supplication:

God of the Risen Christ and the rising earth,
we come before you this day
giving thanks for all the wonder in your creation:
for the tiny perfection revealed in a baby’s fingers grasping ours,
in each daffodil unzipping its jacket to greet the spring,
and each rock face worn by wind and water,
bearing its rugged beauty with your praise.
These details lift our hearts to praise you, too.
So let the details of the story the Risen Christ lift our hearts this day,
that we may greet a new week
as an occasion to discover him in our midst,
making all things new with the springtime of your Spirit.
Receive our heartfelt worship, O God,
Creator, Christ and Spirit,
ever Three and ever One,
now and evermore. Amen.

Prayer of Confession (Unison):

God of mercy:

**you have called us to be thankful
for your good gifts to us,
but too often we have taken them for granted
as if we deserved them.**

**You have called us to be hopeful
through the gospel of Jesus Christ,
but too often despair has come upon us,
and the cares of the world
have weighed us down.**

**You have called us to be joyful
in the wonder of your presence among us,
but too often we become mired in the mundane
and lose the gift of reverence.**

**By your saving power, O God,
enable us to celebrate your love for us
with joy and thanksgiving.**

God offers the assurance of grace:

*Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,
so must the Son of Man be lifted up,
that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.¹*

Believe the gospel:
In Jesus Christ sin is forgiven,
in Jesus Christ we can be reconciled to our Father,
in Jesus Christ we are made new creatures.

Accept the irrational grace of God,
and be at peace with God,
at peace with one another,
and at peace with your own self.

And give thanks to the Lord,
for He is good;
His love endures forever.

We offer our lives and resources:

Offering plates are positioned as you enter and leave the sanctuary. If you'd prefer to use e-transfers, please speak with Rev. Ian, Judy Armstrong (St. Andrew's), or Howard McKellar (Knox)

God speaks to us:

Readings: John 20:19-31

¹ John 3:14-15

Peace be with You

1. On the evening of the third day after Jesus was crucified, on the first day of the week, his disciples met in a private house, and locked the doors. They were scared. We know from the other gospels that they were also sad, disappointed, and despairing. Their hopes had been asphyxiated on a cross.

And yet, despite the cross, despite the tomb, despite the locked door; over and against their despair and disappointment, Jesus came, stood among them and said: “Peace be with you.”

Three times Jesus spoke to his disciples who were overwhelmed by their grief and in danger of succumbing to the darkness of their despair, doubt, and disappointment, and said: “Peace be with you.”

That was likely as familiar a greeting as “Hello” is to us, yet coming from the mouth of the One who absorbed our sin into himself, bore our wounds in his body, suffered our punishment, faced the devil and overcame death on our behalf, those four words carry profound significance.

Peace be with you.

The peace Jesus was offering was freedom from fears and from anxieties together with a sense of hope that transcends present circumstances which one can only experience in fellowship with the God from whom all blessings flow.

Jesus stood among them and said that this peace was theirs, now.

2. Several years ago, Hannah and I were blessed to attend a gathering of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation in the Yukon Territory. As part of our swag, we were given two travel mugs whose lids are press-fit rather than screwed.

Whenever I use the mugs, they leak.

Several weeks ago, I was buying some lumber and the sawyer also sold me a stainless-steel travel mug insert which fits inside a wooden body which one turns on a lathe. The lid for this travel mug-to-be, like that of our Carcross/Tagish mugs, is press-fit rather than screwed.

Because of my previous experience I believed that once I had made my wooden travel mug, it too would leak.

What we believe or don't believe is often the consequence of some experience that engaged our emotions and usually involved some encounter with another person. My belief that it is not possible to have a press-fit mug that doesn't leak is based on an emotional and relational experience: Hannah and I were newly married, the trip was a wedding present from my uncle and aunt whom I greatly respect, we were in a beautiful part of Canada, and we were blessed to be involved in this gathering. And we were given these mugs. When I first held the mug, I experienced joy. The mug became for me a symbol of our trip. When my mug leaked, I felt considerable disappointment. My memento of the experience was, for me, useless. That disappointment manifests again whenever I encounter similar mugs with press-fit lids. This style of mug leaks.

I made the mug.

And, for the first several days, whenever I took a drink, I would be convinced that I felt coffee dripping over my thumb.

But there was no leaking coffee.

I actually had a beautiful, hand-turned travel mug which didn't leak.

And yet, because of my toxic belief about press-fit lids, I was unable to enjoy the experience of drinking coffee out of a hand-made, wooden mug. My experience of life – in this admittedly mundane example – was significantly limited because of my toxic belief grown out of disappointment. I couldn't believe that I actually had such a blessing!

If I struggle to believe that I could have a coffee cup that doesn't leak, how can I believe that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, that sin is forgiven, and that in his name I can actually receive the peace of God that heals all wounds in this present age?

3. I would hazard to guess that many of us are like Thomas. We've been disappointed before. Miracles don't happen.

Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.

Unless I can see him for myself, I will not believe.

Toxic beliefs that limit our experience of life change into beliefs that lead to peace when we have a positive encounter that evokes emotions of joy and hope and thus creates a new memory.

Thomas needed to encounter the risen Christ in order to believe.

4. So too, we need to encounter the risen Christ in order to believe the gospel that sin is forgiven, that death does not control our living, and thus believing, receive the peace that transcends our momentary circumstances and enjoy the life that is of eternal qualities here-and-now.

Jesus breathed on his disciples. By the Holy Spirit working through the message and ministry of other believers, we can encounter the risen Christ, believe in the gospel, and in believing have life in his name.

Who has God placed in your life through whom the Holy Spirit is breathing words to change your toxic beliefs into beliefs that lead to peace?

Last week we read Mark's account of Jesus' interactions with his disciples after his resurrection. And we read that he appeared among his disciples as they sat at the table in grief, and said to them: "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation."

As we've read today, in John's account, Jesus came into the room in which the disciples had fearfully locked themselves and sent them *out* as the Father had sent him.

Whenever the disciples encountered the resurrected Jesus, they didn't stay put for long! The peace they received wasn't theirs to squirrel away - they were commissioned for ministry and given no time to lose!

Christians in every age share this ministry.

Including us:

As the Father has sent me, so I send you.

Our purpose, as Christ's church, is to continue His ministry.

To whom is the Lord sending you to speak words of forgiveness and healing in Christ's name so that they can encounter the Holy Spirit and by the Spirit's ministry transform their toxic beliefs into beliefs that lead to peace?

Hymn: #811 “Standing at the portal”

We respond in prayers of thanksgiving and intercession

Lord Jesus Christ,
We draw near to you in prayer this day,
trusting that your love does change lives
and your resurrection brings renewal and redemption into the world God loves.
As we lay before you the concerns on our hearts today,
we pray that you will draw near to the people and situations we name
and bring each one the gift that is needed:
In your great mercy,
Hear our prayers.

We lay before you, Lord, the concerns we share from the news headlines
and the many world situations where hope and change are desperately needed.

*Here, add any specific concerns from the week just past
and then keep silence for 15 seconds.*

In your great mercy,
Hear our prayers.

We lay before you, Lord, those who are in hospital or care
and all those who struggle with illness, pain or health burdens of any sort;
and we remember those facing grief and loss, bearing burdens of sorrow and worry.

*Here, add any specific pastoral concerns in the congregation and community
and then keep silence for 15 seconds.*

In your great mercy,
Hear our prayers.

We lay before you, Lord, families under stress, relationships that are strained,
friends and neighbours in need of reconciliation,
and we pray for the healing of divisions in our country.

Keep silence for 15 seconds

In your great mercy,
Hear our prayers.

We lay before you, Lord, the earth itself, struggling in so many places to maintain
its fruitfulness,
and we pray for all the vulnerable creatures and communities who are finding it
harder and harder to live on land, sea or sky.

Here, add any specific environmental concerns in your region

and then keep silence for 15 seconds.

In your great mercy,
Hear our prayers.

Lord Jesus,
we believe that you hear our prayers and will be faithful to our requests and concerns.
Use us in every opportunity that presents itself to serve you
by serving our neighbours near and far.
And so we pray together the words you gave us:

The Lord's Prayer

God sends us with God's blessing:

Hymn: #765 "We've a story to tell to the nations"

Blessing: