

**Worship Service for April 11<sup>th</sup>: 2nd Sunday of Easter**

- **New Testament:** Acts 4:32-35
- **New Testament:** John 20:19-31
- **Psalms:** Psalm 133

**Announcements:**

- Welcome to our worship service! We're glad you are reading. We pray that God's blessings and peace will be with you all now and forever! Amen.
- Our next Bible study is on April 21<sup>st</sup>. Time: 7pm; Place: St. David's. We will be studying James 3.

**Sermon Title: As the Father has sent me, I am sending you!**

Last week we celebrated Easter which is a time when Christians commemorate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel of John made us to understand that Jesus revealed himself to Mary Magdalene. She was asked to inform the disciples that Jesus had risen and would be going to his Father and their Father, and to his God and their God.

Today, Jesus decides to show himself to his disciples. When he appears to them, he says "peace be with you." And goes on to show them his hands and his sides. Jesus had to come to the disciples to confirm to them that he had indeed risen as he had promised. He also needed to instruct them on their new responsibilities as his disciples while he was gone, or else they would go back to fishing.

After showing them his hands and sides, he goes on to inform them about their responsibilities. "As my Father has sent me, so I am sending you." Jesus does several remarkable things. Firstly, before telling them their responsibilities, Jesus says "peace be with you." Jesus knows his disciples very well and knows that whenever he was not with them, their courage and faith seemed to leave them. In this consciousness, he begins by offering them the peace of God before telling them their responsibilities as disciples of Christ without their Master.

Secondly, he gives them the gift of the Holy Spirit the Helper, Comforter and Strengthener. He breathes on them and says, "receive the Holy Spirit." By giving them the Holy Spirit, Jesus is fully equipping the disciples for ministry without him.

We too as disciples of Christ have celebrated the period of Lent, journeying with Jesus and experiencing his passion, death and resurrection. After Easter, we cannot just dust ourselves up and go back to our usual day to day activities. We are reminded that we have a new commandment. "As the Father sent me, so I am sending you."

And in case we are wondering what that means, Jesus makes it clear for us. At the beginning of his ministry Jesus went to Nazareth where he was born. Everyone knew Jesus in Nazareth as the carpenter's son and obviously thought he too would become a carpenter someday, which was quite common back then. When Jesus visited the synagogue in Nazareth, he felt the need to let them know what he had been called to do. He took the scroll and opened it to the passage in Isaiah 61:1 which says, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

"As the Father has sent me. So I am sending you." This passage in Luke 4:18 answers our question as Christians today, in case we were wondering what Jesus is sending us to do. Jesus is telling us today that our mission as Christians, especially after celebrating his resurrection is to go out and tell others the good news. To inform those who are in the prison of sin and darkness that there is light and freedom in Christ; to tell those who are spiritually blind that in Jesus they can see again and those who are oppressed that they can be free. Jesus' mission was to atone for the sins of the world so that all who believe would receive eternal life. Our kingdom mission is to proclaim this message to everyone we come across.

Thomas, one of the disciples of Christ wasn't there when Christ showed himself to his disciples and refused to believe when he was told. Our doubts might not be exactly the same as that of Thomas because we have believed that Christ is reason even without seeing him. And he says blessed are those who have believed without seeing. So you are blessed. However, your doubt might be in the area of the responsibility that Jesus is putting on us as Christians and on us as a congregation. We might be doubting if we can do what Jesus has asked us to do.

And we have good reasons for doubting. We have enough proof to show that it won't work. Back in the days people used to love to come to church and we would

have hundreds of people showing up to church. Most of our churches build huge buildings which they are struggling to maintain these days because no one is interested. Our churches are full of senior citizens but the young ones don't want to come anymore. It's not even easy to walk up to somebody and tell them about Jesus without getting into trouble with the law. Worse off, they have taken any form of prayer and Bible Study out of our schools and everybody is doing their own thing these days. And these are all very valid reasons to cause us to doubt if we can succeed in the responsibilities that Jesus is giving to us today.

But Jesus' response to us is twofold, "Peace be with you. Receive the Holy Spirit." I know it is going to be tough that is why I am giving you the Shalom of God – the peace that passes all understanding. I am also giving you the mighty Helper the Holy Spirit. I too needed him to be able to succeed in my ministry here on earth.

And in case you are thinking that your community is like the valley of dry bones, remember that I have the solution to everything. I am breathing the breath of the Holy Spirit on you, so that you will be the first to come back to life. Now you go ahead and forgive those in your communities and when you forgive them I will too. The Holy Spirit is there to enable you to authoritatively declare that God has indeed forgiven the sins of anyone who believes in Jesus Christ. Wherever you find yourself today receive the breath of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the message of God's kingdom to the people around you. Amen.

### **Prayers**

Thank you, loving God, for your renewing presence in our lives, and for the many ways you make yourself known to us: in words spoken in peace, in actions that embody love, in creation that awakens wonder within us, and in worship that inspires faith and understanding. With memories of the grace you have shown us, and with confidence in you will yet show us more, we pray that all people will come to know the life-giving joy we find in Christ.

We pray for those who are feeling fearful, worried or overwhelmed, especially as the months of pandemic restrictions stretch on. Lord Jesus, reveal to them your risen presence. We pray for those who face violence and unrest each day, in countries around the world and at home in our own community. Lord Jesus, reveal to them your risen presence.

We pray for our national, provincial, and municipal leaders as they lead planning for our communities to recover from the pandemic. Give them wisdom and compassion, Lord Jesus, reveal to them your risen presence.

We pray for our congregation, for churches in our community, and for Christians around the world, especially those who face persecution. Lord Jesus, reveal to them your risen presence.

We pray for our neighbours, especially for those who live in poverty and those who know rejection and discrimination. Lord Jesus, reveal to them your risen presence. We pray for those who are ill, in pain or in grief. We remember before you, silently or aloud, those on our hearts today: *(Keep silence for 20–30 seconds.)* Bring them comfort and strength, Lord Jesus, reveal to them your risen presence.

God our Maker, hear our prayers, and use us in ways we may not yet even imagine, to respond to those around us with the love we see in Jesus Christ and the confidence we draw from his resurrection.

Generous God, we thank you for the hope and joy we find in your resurrecting power. Bless the gifts we bring so they may spread that hope and joy in the world you love. In the name of your greatest gift, Jesus Christ, we pray. With hopeful hearts we offer the prayer that he 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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

### **Benediction**

The Lord bless you and keep you this coming week, you and your loved ones. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance on you and grant to you and yours His wonderful Shalom, wholeness and peace in Jesus' name. Amen.