**COVENANT COMMUNITY ONLINE WORSHIP**

*Presenter: Calvin T Samuel*

**2nd Sunday of Easter**

*Sunday, 19th April 2020*

**~ My Lord and My God! ~**

**Welcome & Introduction**:

Good Morning and welcome to this covenant community online service for the Second Sunday of Easter.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

My name is Calvin Samuel and I’m Methodist minister for the towns of Rochford and Rayleigh in the County of Essex. We may be dispersed because of lockdown but we are determined to come together in worship as a covenant community.

In the days and weeks that followed the death and resurrection of Christ during that first period of Easter the disciples struggled to understand both what had happened and what were implications for their lives and behaviour. Had Jesus really risen? Was this a resurrection or was it simply a vision of Jesus from beyond the grave? How were they to understand Jesus’ seeming ability to appear and disappear at will, to get through locked doors and to conceal his identity even from those who were closest to him? Were these the actions of a friend or a fiend, a God or a ghost?

The disciples, and the church resulting from their testimony, eventually came to understand and to believe that the resurrection of Christ, which we celebrate at Easter, is an authenticating sign of Christ’s divinity. Put more simply, the resurrection demonstrated once and for all that Jesus Christ was not only a messenger of God, nor merely a god or god like creature; actually, Jesus Christ was and is the one true and living God, Creator of heaven and earth. And that One true God in love gave himself for us.

Our first hymn, And can it be, declares our wonder at God’s amazing love.

**Hymn: And can it be that I should gain** (StF 345)

And can it be that I should gain

An int’rest in the Saviour’s blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
*Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?*

’Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies!
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love Divine!
*’Tis mercy all! let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.*

He left His Father’s throne above,
So free, so infinite His grace;
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam’s helpless race:
*’Tis mercy all, immense and free;
For, O my God, it found out me.*

Long my imprisoned spirit lay
Fast bound in sin and nature’s night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
*My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.*

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness Divine,
*Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.*

*Charles Wesley, 1707-1788*

**PRAYERS**

Let us pray.

God of beginnings and endings,

God of waiting and longing and anticipation,

God of life, and death, and resurrection:

may your life be present to us

your light sufficient for us

and your love made known in us and through us

as we await your coming. **Amen**

**SCRIPTURE**

On the second Sunday of Easter, a full week after the resurrection, we discover the disciples who had met the risen Christ on Easter Day had not done very much with that information. They were locked in a room, perhaps the same one, that Jesus had found them in a week before.

Before we judge them too harshly we might do well to remember that we sometimes are like that. We hear the Good News but do very little with it.

Let’s hear the word of the Lord. Our Old Testament lesson is from Psalm 16, a song of trust and security in God. Our New Testament lesson come from John chapter 20 which in contrast portrays the disciples feeling very little trust and security in God.

**Psalm 16.1–11**

*Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.*

*I say to the Lord, “You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.”*

*As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble,*

*in whom is all my delight.*

*Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows;*

*their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out*

*or take their names upon my lips.*

*The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.*

*The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;*

*I have a goodly heritage. I bless the Lord who gives me counsel;*

*in the night also my heart instructs me.*

*I keep the Lord always before me;*

*because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.*

*Therefore, my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure. For you do not give me up to Sheol,*

*or let your faithful one see the Pit. You show me the path of life.*

*In your presence there is fullness of joy;*

*in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

**John 20.19–31**

*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.” After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”*

*But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “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.”*

*A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”*

*Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.*

**WHAT A BEAUTIFUL NAME**

You were the Word at the beginning
One With God the Lord Most High
Your hidden glory in creation
Now revealed in You our Christ

What a beautiful Name it is
What a beautiful Name it is
The Name of Jesus Christ my King

What a beautiful Name it is
Nothing compares to this
What a beautiful Name it is
The Name of Jesus

You didn't want heaven without us
So Jesus, You brought heaven down
My sin was great, Your love was greater
What could separate us now

What a wonderful Name it is
What a wonderful Name it is
The Name of Jesus Christ my King

What a wonderful Name it is
Nothing compares to this
What a wonderful Name it is
The Name of Jesus
What a wonderful Name it is
The Name of Jesus

Death could not hold You, the veil tore before You
You silenced the boast, of sin and grave
The heavens are roaring, the praise of Your glory
For You are raised to life again

You have no rival, You have no equal
Now and forever, Our God reigns
Yours is the Kingdom, Yours is the glory
Yours is the Name, above all names

What a powerful Name it is
What a powerful Name it is
The Name of Jesus Christ my King

What a powerful Name it is
Nothing can stand against
What a powerful Name it is
The Name of Jesus

*Brooke Ligertwood & Ben Fielding © Hillsong Music*

**The Sermon**

Our Gospel lesson describes the second encounter with the risen Christ in the week following the resurrection. Let us look at what happens, in the actions of Jesus, the reaction of the disciples and the confession of Thomas.

In this story we see the actions of Jesus clearly underline his sovereignty over the physical world, and these actions are indicators of his identity. On the evening of Easter Day Jesus found the disciples locked in a room because they were afraid, but he enters the room anyway, he shows them his hands and side, and breathed on them. These are acts both of authentication and identification. Jesus needs undertake actions of authentication. They had all seen him crucified. It’s understandable that they needed some reassurances. Showing them his hands and feet proves that it’s really him. Greeting them in his traditional way, peace be with you, pronouncing God’s shalom, is consistent with his previous pattern. Breathing on them is not only for impartation of the Holy Spirit. It also demonstrates he’s not a ghost, or a vision. He’s the real deal.

Though the actions of Jesus are about authentication they also point to identification. Who is this man, who rose from the dead, enters locked rooms, and imparts the Holy Spirit? Well he has to be more than a man. These actions of Jesus point to his ultimate identity, that he is divine.

I remember learning Newton’s third law of motion in school. You may have done too. To every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. So, what was the reaction of the disciples to Jesus’ actions on Easter Day? Well, very little it appears. Despite having seen the risen Christ, receiving the Holy Spirit, been commissioned by Jesus with the words: As the Father has sent me, so I send you, can you imagine that a week later Jesus returns to find they are still in the same room? The disciples behave as though they were on lockdown. They didn’t go anywhere.

So a week after resurrection, the Second Sunday of Easter, a day like today, Jesus appeared again. But this time it’s different. On Easter Day Thomas was not present when Jesus appeared. He refused to believe what the others had told him. Maybe that’s why the disciples lacked the courage to tell anyone else about the resurrection of Jesus. If we can’t persuade Thomas, one of The Twelve, what chance have we of persuading anyone else?

But for this second appearance Thomas is present. And Jesus challenged him for his unbelief. I don’t think that Thomas was any worse than the other disciples. I think that he was simply more honest. Thomas wasn’t the only one who did not believe that Christ was risen. The others also failed to believe it. That’s why they remained in the house, saying nothing. So I think Thomas simply gave voice to what everyone else was thinking. The resurrection cannot possibly be true. I don’t care that Jesus turned up. I don’t care that he breathed on us. The bottom line is that dead men do not come back from the grave all by themselves.

In Jesus’ challenge to Thomas, then, he also challenges all the disciples: Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe! The resurrection serves as an authenticating function for the identity of Jesus.

When we say ‘Alleluia! Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!’** we say something significant about our understanding of Christ. We see this most fully in the confession of Thomas, who was the first to put into words the distinctive Christian doctrine, that this Christ, who was crucified, died, was buried, and who rose on the third day, this Christ, who shared our human life and death, this man Christ, who was born as every human is born and died as every human dies is, nonetheless, the God of heaven and earth. And he manages to say all of this with an amazing economy of five words: My Lord and my God!

For Thomas, a Jew, to refer to Jesus as my Lord and my God is a huge deal. This is a profound statement of faith. It goes against everything that his Jewish heritage had taught him, that there is but one God. Nevertheless, Thomas embraces that which he cannot escape: this Jesus, in demonstrating his lordship over life and death, his lordship over the physical world, his lordship over all things must be that one Lord and God, Creator of heaven and earth.

The events of Easter still challenge us to respond to and to accept the Lordship of Christ and to live our lives for the one who died and rose for us. It seems to me that this is at least in part why we celebrate Easter. Yes, we celebrate that Christ has died, Christ is risen and Christ will come again. However, in our celebrating we do not fail to remember that the one who died for us bids us to live for him. That is why the risen Christ has breathed his Spirit upon us and into us so that we are empowered to live for him in the power of the resurrection. **Amen.**

**Prayers –** *Let us pray.*

God of Power,

who overcomes darkness

make us holy through your grace

that the world may encounter living examples

of your kingdom of light and love.

God of Truth,

shine on us the light of your Spirit that we may

see ourselves as we really are, see others as sisters and brothers

for whom Christ also died, and see revealed in your creation,

in all its forms, signs of your redeeming love.

God of Grace

In your love forgive us our sins

and by your power transform us into your likeness,

that we may truly reflect your holiness

and radiate your goodness in the world.

God of Compassion we hold before you

all those affected by the covid-19 global pandemic

those who are ill or bereaved,

those working in health care caring for loved ones,

those in essential services working on all our behalf

those who face financial and relational hardships in lockdown:

please draw near and bring healing and hope.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son,

Our Saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

We draw all our prayers together in the prayer that Jesus gave us

in its modern form:

**Our Father in heaven,**

**hallowed be your Name,**

**your kingdom come, your will be done,**

**on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins,**

**as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial**

**and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,**

**now and forever. Amen.**

Alleluia! Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

Easter is a time in which we celebrate God’s love for us in Christ Jesus. At Easter we celebrate a God who came among us, lived our life, died our death, bore our sins, and whose resurrection life we now share by his Spirit, that he has breathed upon us. So, we end with a song in praise of that love. You might what to turn up the volume for this one. Your love is amazing.

**Your Love is Amazing**

Steady and unchanging
Your love is a mountain
Firm beneath my feet

Your love is a mystery
How you gently lift me
When I am surrounded
Your love carries me

*Hallelujah, hallelujah, Hallelujah
Your love makes me sing
Hallelujah, hallelujah, Hallelujah
Your love makes me sing*

Your love is surprising
I can feel it rising
Oh the joy that's glowing
Deep inside of me

Everytime I see you
All your goodness shines through
I can feel this God song
Rising up in me

**THE BLESSING**

God the Father,

by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead,

strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life;

and may almighty God bless you,

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

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