

Service for Week 21st -27th April 2025

By Chaplain Andy

Our Opening Prayer.

Lord Jesus Christ help us to speak of the relationship we have with you, not preaching but simply pointing out what you mean to us. Not judging others but sharing through our words and our lives your unfailing love.

Amen

Say to yourself- The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven.....

Amen

Bible Reading John 20:19-31

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors 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 side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Second Reading Acts 5:27-32

Having brought the apostles, they made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said.

"Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men! The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead—whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

Holy words, Holy wisdom,

Thanks be to God.

Reflection

After the events of Jesus' arrest and his subsequent shocking and awful death on a cross the disciples were terrified. In their fear that they would be the next to be killed they gathered together in an upper room and securely locked themselves in.

Just imagine how they must have felt being very afraid and at the same time grieving for their beloved leader Jesus who had been so cruelly killed. What were they to do now? Had Jesus let them down -had he persuaded them to be part of something that had no future and that had ended with his death. Who would lead them now? The only thing they could do is to huddle together and decide what to do next.

I am sure that many of them at that point lost their faith in Jesus.



Lost their faith that Jesus was from God and of God and this was the end of what he had started through his teachings and his time spent with them travelling throughout Judeah. Now they were left to face the music-persecution and the real possibility that they would all be arrested and put to death for being associated with Jesus and for being his followers.

But then as they were no doubt terrified and at their wits end worrying about what to do next, Jesus suddenly appears with them. He simply says to them "Peace be with you!" words that we often use in our churches today. Those words calmed their fears and they would have had the glorious realization that it was not all over- Jesus was who he said he was. Their thoughts would be 'we didn't believe it when he told us but he said he would return after three days and he is here with us now- Hallelujah'

Jesus then goes on to tell them that he has a mission for them, they are to go out and tell everyone about what has happened - that he has been restored to life. They are to go and spread his teachings and the truth about God, and although he would not be with them for long, he will give them the Holy Spirit to help them, guide them and give them strength and encouragement in the future. Tell people, Jesus says, that your sins are forgiven if you forgive others for their

sins against you. Words we say now in the Lord's Prayer that Jesus gave us 'Forgive us our trespasses (sins) as we forgive others who trespass (sin) against us.'

After this, as our second reading, the disciple's faith had been restored and they went out with renewed strength and encouragement. They were brought before the Sanhedrin (the judicial body of ancient Judaism) "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," they said. The disciples answer to that was "We must obey God rather than men!

When they said that they must obey God this didn't mean that God was telling them directly. Throughout history people have carried out very good but also some terrible acts in the belief that it was God speaking to them. What I believe they meant was that God through Jesus had instructed them to go out and preach the message of love, forgiveness and redemption that He taught them. It is that same message that we take from this time of Easter to live out in our lives and the lives of those around us.

Amen

Closing Prayer.

Gracious God, help me to be fully involved in the world and yet to live also in the light of the world to come, and so may my life witness your purpose and your saving love. **Amen.**

Prayers inspired by 'Prayfully Yours' by Nick Fawcett