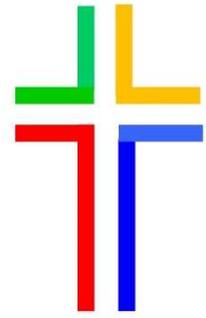


Week St Mary Methodist Church – Sunday 19 April



We are at the end of a week when Captain Tom has inspired us not only with the scale of his fundraising but also his optimism that everything will be alright in the end. Our worship today is about having faith that Jesus the Risen Lord is with us today and always.

PRAYER

Lord, we thank You that we can come close to You without being afraid. In the life and death of Jesus, You have shown us how much You love us. You raised Him to new life, life that will last for ever, and this shows us that Your love for us will never

die. How wonderful it is to worship you, knowing that You love us so much. Fill our hearts with love for You, and may that love overflow as we worship You, so this time will be filled with joy that no one can take away.

READING FOR TODAY John 20:19-31 (NIV)

⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

²¹ Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.'

²² And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'

Jesus appears to Thomas

²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!'

But he said to them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger

where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.'

²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them.

Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.'

²⁸ Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!'

²⁹ Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'

The purpose of John's gospel

³⁰ Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

REFLECTION

John's resurrection appearances build up to a big finish for his gospel. This appearance is the first time they have seen Jesus since his death, and the wounds in his hands and side prove that it is he, that he is alive, and they are then empowered for the mission which is to come. The second appearance is aimed at John's own readers, many years after the events in the gospel: Thomas wasn't there for the first appearance, and is unable to accept their claims (perhaps he should be called 'Common-Sense Thomas' rather than 'Doubting Thomas'). Jesus

appears again and shows himself to Thomas, whose glorious affirmation 'My Lord and My God' 'bookends' the whole story with the words of the Prologue that 'the Word is God.' Then Jesus specifically refers to those like John's readers and all who read him in later centuries (including us), who would never have the opportunity that Thomas had to see for himself. They are even more blessed in having faith in the risen Christ. Paul confirms this in 2 Corinthians 5:7, "For we live by faith, not by sight." It would be easier perhaps to walk by sight not faith, we often try to. But it is faith that is the glue that holds our Christian lives together. Faith that is clearly defined for us in Hebrews 11:1 "... faith is the assurance of what we hope for and the certainty of what we do not see." Faith expressed with other words in a famous hymn, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine, O what a foretaste of glory divine."

PRAYER FOR OTHERS

Lord our Father, as Jesus entered the locked room to show His disciples the beginning of a new world, so enter our hearts and move us to faith in Jesus as the Risen One. Convince us of the reality and significance of the resurrection, and free us from all manner of fears and phobias.

Be with your church throughout the world so that its preaching and works of love may continue to testify to our Lord's resurrection. Be with all our ministers, pastors and preachers so that they may listen well and then speak and act with Christ's authority.

Visit and comfort the sick and suffering, dear Lord. Heal and strengthen weak bodies, calm and correct confused minds. We pray for those who are suffering and bereaved of Coronavirus. Support them all with your great love and mercy.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is risen from the dead, and who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

HYMN

Thine be the glory,
Risen, conquering Son;
Endless is the victory
Thou o'er death hast won.
Angels in bright raiment
Rolled the stone away,
Kept the folded grave-clothes

Where Thy body lay.

*CHORUS: Thine be the glory,
Risen, conquering Son;
Endless is the victory
Thou o'er death hast won!*

Lo, Jesus meets us,
Risen from the tomb!
Lovingly He greets us,
Scatters fear and gloom.
Let the church with gladness
Hymns of triumph sing,
For her Lord now liveth,
Death hath lost its sting.

No more we doubt Thee,
Glorious Prince of life;
Life is naught without Thee:
Aid us in our strife;
Make us more than conquerors,
Through Thy deathless love;
Bring us safe through Jordan
To Thy home above. *H&P 212 STF 313*

BLESSING

Thomas said 'My Lord and my God.' As we finish our private worship, may those same words be upon our lips and may they guide our lives. And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Be upon us and remain with us always.

"The key to our lives as Christians today is how clearly we 'see' by faith the resurrected Christ." Dave Hunt – American Minister and Broadcaster