**Morning Praise @ Home 16th April 2023**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Readings 1 Peter 1: 3 – 9 John 20: 1 – 18

### Reflection from Sue

Last week was such a celebration – for Christians around the world, the greatest day of the year. In our reading from Peter that joy spills out…. Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we’ve been given a brand-new life and have everything to live for, including a future in heaven—and the future starts now!

Yet it wasn’t quite like that at first. Instead of joy and certainty spilling out, our reading from John 20:19 says ‘On the evening of that first day of the week, .. the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders,’

It is Easter evening, the day of the resurrection, the day some of the disciples saw the empty tomb, the day Mary Magdalene announced, ‘I have seen the Lord.’ … Yet Jesus’ followers are gathered in a house with the doors locked in fear.

There are days when all of us prefer to just pull the covers over our head and shut out the world. Some days it seems easier and safer to lock the doors of our house and avoid the circumstances and people who impact our lives in a way that drains us. Sometimes we just want to run away, hide, and not deal with the reality of our lives.

Yet every time we shut the doors of our life, our mind, or our heart we imprison ourselves. Whenever we lock out a person, event, or idea, we lock ourselves in. That’s what has happened to the disciples in today’s reading – and v.26 tells us that nothing much has changed a week later:

* Whilst Jesus’ tomb is open and empty, the disciples’ house is closed and the doors locked tight. The house has become their tomb.
* Although Jesus is on the loose, the disciples are bound by fear.
* They have separated themselves and their lives from the liberating reality of Jesus’ resurrection.
* They have shut their eyes to the truth that life is now different, locking out Mary Magdalene’s words of faith, hope, and love.
* Their doors of faith have been closed.
* Leaving the empty tomb of Jesus, they’ve instead entered their own tombs of fear, doubt, and blindness, locking themselves in.

And you know what? The doors of our tombs are always locked from the inside.

As we reflect on that first Easter, in what condition are *we* living?

* Entering the freedom and joy of resurrection - or stuck behind locked doors?
* Is our daily life truly different as a result of that first Easter?
* And if it isn’t, what are the locked doors in our life, our heart, our mind?
* Maybe, like the disciples, it is fear.
* Maybe it is questions, disbelief, or the conditions we place on our faith. Remember Thomas who couldn’t believe what he was told until Jesus himself provided concrete evidence?
* Perhaps we are locked in by sorrow and loss.
* Maybe our wounds are so deep it does not seem worth the risk to step outside.
* For others it may be anger and resentment.
* Some of us may just be unable or unwilling to open up to new ideas, possibilities, and change.

Yet Jesus is constantly looking to enter the locked places of our lives. Sometimes unexpected, not always consciously invited, he steps into our closed lives, closed hearts, closed minds.

(v 19-20) 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.

Standing among us he offers peace and breathes new life into us. He doesn’t open the door *for* us but rather gives us all we need so that *we* might open our doors to what the resurrection offers - a new life, a new creation, a new way of being.

I absolutely believe that the resurrection is an historical event. But there comes a point when we need to encounter, not just the Jesus of history, but the Christ who can be known today by faith and the grace of God’s Spirit, to encounter the living Jesus in 2023. We need to live now in the power and reality that Jesus is alive and active.

During the run up to Easter, many in our congregation were exploring the reality of how we fail and fall short of what God desires for us. But we also learnt that God never gives up on us but calls us to set out on his path again, not constrained by previous experiences. He gives us the chance to live differently, following new guidance, by which we can live life in all its fullness.

Placing our faith in the resurrected Christ means that what God did for Jesus on Easter Sunday he does for each one of us, in the very depths of our being. The heavy stone sealing the tomb has been rolled aside. What does God want to open up in our lives?

* The deepening of our relationship with Jesus, as we regularly make space to encounter him through the Bible and in prayer?
* Increasing our trust that, as we talk about our faith to others, God will be with us?
* The chance to truly celebrate because we have released our grief, resentment or disappointment into God’s hands?
* The risen Jesus offers us his peace, his breath, his life … and then sends us out.
* Let’s unlock the doors of our lives and step outside into more of his resurrection life. **Amen**

**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession led by Edwina**

Lord Jesus Christ

1) We remember before you the world’s greatest needs and its unnoticed sorrows: the countries where some are intoxicated with war, but most are dreadfully weary of it.

We continue to pray for Ukraine, for a just & peaceful resolution.

We pray for the peoples of Afghanistan, & Iraq….and countries where a silent slaughter is happening while the world’s gaze has moved on.

We pray for countries of central Africa where great swathes of the population have been wiped out by AIDS:

and the countries in deep need where children die for want of clean water & starvation.

We pray for refugees: be with them Lord, on their journey to safety.

Bring comfort to the wounded & those who grieve…..

Dear Lord Jesus, give them your peace.

Lord in your mercy…..

(2) Dear Lord we pray for the work of Save the Children and Médecins Sans Frontières: we pray for the work of doctors, nurses, & other health workers as they seek to make real the ‘love of Christ’.

Lord in your mercy…

(3)We pray for those whom we love, the special people you have given to us wherever they may be. We pray for our friends, the close ones and those who need you.

We thank you for each of them and what they give to us.

Lord in your mercy…..

(4)Dear Lord, we pray for those for whom this day will seem very long and hard: for those in hospital, nursing home or ill at home: those struggling with despair or depression: for those waiting for a job or important news……or just a friend to call.

We pray at this time for Geoffrey and Josie.

We name in our hearts those we know in special need.

Lord in your mercy….

(5)Lord Jesus Christ,

Reach out now to our broken world, and teach us to reach out in turn.

Show us where you would have us serve; teach us what you would have us do, & use us to fulfil your purposes.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***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 today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**