

Daily Prayer

Wednesday in Easter Week

Wednesday, April 7, 2021

We enter into a time of quiet. We offer to God our selves and in the silence know that God embraces us as God's very own. We offer our hopes and our concerns through our prayers and in the silence listen for God. Today we hold in our prayers the ordinary moments in life—the trials and the joys.

We begin by saying

Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us;
therefore let us keep the feast.

1 Corinthians 5.7-8

The First Reading

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon. And a man lame from birth was being carried in. People would lay him daily at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the temple. When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked them for alms. Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, 'Look at us.' And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, 'I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk.' And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. Jumping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. All the people saw him walking and praising God, and they recognized him as the one who used to sit and ask for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Acts 3.1-10

The Psalm

O give thanks to the Lord and call upon his name; ♦
make known his deeds among the peoples.

Sing to him, sing praises, ♦
and tell of all his marvellous works.

Rejoice in the praise of his holy name; ♦
let the hearts of them rejoice who seek the Lord.

Seek the Lord and his strength; ♦
seek his face continually.

Remember the marvels he has done, ♦
his wonders and the judgements of his mouth,

O seed of Abraham his servant, ♦
O children of Jacob his chosen.

He is the Lord our God; ♦
his judgements are in all the earth.

He has always been mindful of his covenant, ♦
the promise that he made for a thousand generations:

The covenant he made with Abraham, ♦
the oath that he swore to Isaac,

Psalm 105.1-9

The Gospel Reading

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk

along?’ They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, ‘Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?’ He asked them, ‘What things?’ They replied, ‘The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.’ Then he said to them, ‘Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?’ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, ‘Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.’ So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?’ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, ‘The Lord has

risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. *Luke 24.13-35*

We continue with the reflection that follows. In silence, we ask what the reading has to say to us today. Is there something in the reflection that draws us more deeply into the reading? What does God have to say to us? What do we have to ask God?

The Reflection

Susan Haig

The story of resurrection is not over on Easter morning, but continues to unfold throughout the day. The fullness of its message opens gently and gradually as two people walk away from Jerusalem. Then it erupts in a climatic moment of epiphany produced by a simple homespun gesture at the dinner table. And so by the time the two travellers turn around just hours later to return to the city, their hearts and minds are also turned around. Healed. Reoriented.

These travellers are friends of Jesus. One is named Cleopas; the other is left unnamed. While not part of Jesus' most inner circle of 12, they are clearly part of his cohort, intimate friends in the know. Their obvious grief and loyalty remind us that the circle of care around Jesus was much larger than the one specifically described in Scripture.

Cleopas and his companion are making their way to the village of Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. It's not clear why. Perhaps they're hightailing it out of Jerusalem for fear of the authorities. Perhaps in their misery they're going home, and Emmaus is home. Whatever their motive, it's more than likely they're a ball of feelings, a hot mess of grief, fear, guilt, and shame alternating with shock and bewilderment. Maybe that's why they're walking. Emmaus is just a destination. Any old place will do as long as they keep moving.

Walking is the best kind of therapy sometimes. Walking and talking to a trusted other. As they walk they tell and re-tell the events of the past week: the final meal Jesus had with the 12; the betrayal in the garden; the trial, torture and cruel crucifixion. Likely they reproach themselves over and over again because, unlike Mary Magdalene and John and the other women, they took off. They couldn't bear to stay and watch. They weren't there for Jesus when it mattered most.

Walking and talking is so deeply engrossing on this occasion, that when their friend and master draws near, they don't recognize him. What's more, his joining and questioning them stops them dead in their tracks. They stand still, unable to take another step, looking sad. Frozen in their grief. Amazed that this stranger, who also hails from Jerusalem, doesn't know all the things that have just gone down concerning Jesus of Nazareth. Briefly they recount the horrific facts and then the horror of their despair and disappointment: "but we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel." Lamenting the end of a dream. They continue their story, recounting next the amazing turnaround of events including the vision of angels and the empty tomb; but they're unable to connect the dots, unable to loosen themselves from their footprints on the road. Unable to move on.

That's when the stranger begins the work for which he's appeared. For all kinds of reasons – foolishness, slowness of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared – they're struggling mightily to make meaning of what has just happened. Jesus places it firmly and decisively into the larger story of God's people, making the connections for them, perhaps reminding them of parts of the story they've forgotten or neglected. But still their eyes are veiled.

It is at the end of this momentous day when the climatic moment of reconciliation occurs, at least for these two. The two travellers urge the stranger to turn in and stay with them at the village of Emmaus. At table, in the simple gesture of blessing, breaking and sharing the bread, their eyes are opened and they recognize him. Ah yes, the One from whose hand the manna in the desert was sprinkled. The One who fed the 5,000 on the hillside. The One who offered radical hospitality to outcasts and sinners and the least of these. The One who hosted a dinner with his closest friends the night before his death, to teach them one more time the meaning of true, self-giving love.

But there's the rub. Because even in that last precious moment of loving hospitality, the disciples betrayed and broke their precious bonds of love with Jesus. They engaged in prideful jousting with one another and even with him, misunderstanding once again the lessons of servanthood and offering instead the service of swords. So, to come back in his risen form and offer his friends – albeit not the ones at that last supper but symbolically all who had failed him – all of us – table fellowship once again is to restore all that was broken, both in general terms and in significant specificity. Cleopas and his companion are not neutral, innocent, uninvolved bystanders any more than we are. And yet Jesus comes to them – and to us – offering the bread of life. That is how they recognize him. That is why they recognize him. In and through acts of forgiving, reconciling, redeeming love. In and at one of the places where it had gone most wrong.

The journey to Emmaus and the sharing of the meal speak to a restoration of relationship broken by human infidelity. As Jesus walks and talks with Cleopas and the other traveller, and opens the Scriptures to them, they are made present to their failures and to their complicity in his betrayal and death, so much so that their

hearts burn within them. But despite all of that he stays to break bread with them, offering them his risen but wounded presence, and through that the message of reconciliation and new beginnings. The message that they are still loved and accepted despite all that they did or failed to do. It is a message they hear and receive. For without delay, they get up to return from whence they came, to the scene of their crimes, to share this good news of forgiveness and restoration with the others. And so when the sun sets on that Easter day, the good news of resurrection has begun its deep work of judgment, reconciliation, and evangelism. It is glorious. But it is also just the beginning.

When the time is right, we conclude our time of silence with the canticle

The Canticle ~ Song of Solomon

Set me as a seal upon your heart, ♦
as a seal upon your arm;

For love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave; ♦
its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame.

Many waters cannot quench love, ♦
neither can the floods drown it.

If all the wealth of our house were offered for love, ♦
it would be utterly scorned.

cf Song of Solomon 8.6,7

We continue in prayer for those people and situations that we hold up before God (The Intercessions) and continue with the concluding collect, the Lord's prayer and the closing sentences.

The Intercessions

In joy and hope let us pray to the source of all life, saying,
“Hear us, Lord of glory!”

That our risen Saviour may fill us with the joy of his holy and life-giving resurrection, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

That isolated and persecuted churches may find fresh strength in the Easter gospel, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

That he may grant us humility to be subject to one another in Christian love, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

That he may provide for those who lack food, work, or shelter, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

That by his power wars and famine may cease through all the earth, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

That he may reveal the light of his presence to the sick, the weak, and the dying, that they may be comforted and strengthened, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

That he may send the fire of the Holy Spirit upon his people, that we may bear faithful witness to his resurrection, let us pray to the Lord.

Hear us, Lord of glory!

Our prayers conclude

Almighty God,
through your Son Jesus Christ
you overcame death and opened to us
the gate of everlasting life
grant us so to die daily to sin,
that we may evermore live with him
in the joy of his resurrection;
who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit,
one God now and for ever.

[let us pray as our Saviour taught us,]

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 for ever. Amen

We conclude

May the risen Christ grant us the joys of eternal life.
Amen.

Let us bless the Lord. Alleluia, alleluia.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia.

Credits:

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