

The Vine at Home - Third Sunday of Easter 26th April 2020

Prayer

I am here, Lord.

I am here to worship you.

I am here to pray.

I am here to sing your praises and to weep with you.

I am here, Lord.

Uncertain, living with lockdown and afraid,

But I am here.

Come Lord Jesus, Amen.¹

Hymn: 548 STF – Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K5a0wBF4ok0>

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine;

Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!

Heir of salvation, purchase of God,

Born of His Spirit, lost in His blood.

Refrain *This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Saviour all the day long.
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Saviour all the day long.*

Perfect submission, perfect delight,

Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;

Angels descending, bring from above

Echoes of mercy, whispers of love. *Refrain*

Perfect submission, all is at rest,

I in my Saviour am happy and blest;

Watching and waiting, looking above,

Filled with His goodness, lost in His love. *Refrain*

¹ Opening prayers by Tim Baker

Prayers

Here we are Lord,
present to you, in the midst of confusing news stories and national lockdown.
We are here, amongst fear and doubt,
amongst busy key-workers and worried furloughed-workers.
We are here, amongst quiet streets and busy hospitals.
We are here, not sure what the future will hold,
waiting for the next announcement, praying for the wider world where coronavirus
will be far more damaging than it might be here.
Amongst all this uncertainty, we turn to you, Lord God, for that blessed assurance.
Come to us; abide with us, risen and holy God.
Amen.²

We say the Lord's Prayer

Reading: 1 Peter 1.17-23

¹⁷ If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. ¹⁸ You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. ²⁰ He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. ²¹ Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

²² Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. ²³ You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.

Reading: Luke 24.13-35 - The Walk to Emmaus

¹³ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?"

² Prayers by Tim Baker

They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ 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?" ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ 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. ²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³ 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. ²⁴ 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." ²⁵ Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³² 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?" ³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴ They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Reflections on the readings

Today's gospel reading, the story of Cleopas and his companion on the Emmaus Road, is one of encounter.

The two disciples, fleeing all that was agonising and painful about the events in Jerusalem, including Jesus' death...they meet a stranger on the road. A stranger who seems oblivious to what has gone on, but seems incredibly well-versed in the scriptures and to have a particularly interesting (and possibly quite radical?) take on how they can be interpreted. He talks to them all the way to the house, and is eventually invited in as a guest.

It is only then, as they break bread together, that the recognition dawns.

This is the Christ.

Jesus, somehow, miraculously, back from the dead.

And as they grasp this truth, he is gone...

Wow – it's quite a story! We go on this roller-coaster of emotions. The premise of the story – meeting someone on the road and inviting them back to your house – is not something we can do at the moment, in the midst of the Coronavirus lockdown. However, the story has lots of encouragement for us as we reflect on what it means to be disciples of Jesus in this strangest of all Easter seasons...

Firstly, in verse 21, where Cleopas reflects on the sadness of Jesus' death – 'we had hoped that he was the one'.

We had hoped.

That seems like a powerful phrase to summarise how lockdown and the affects of Coronavirus have affected many of us.

Perhaps we have already lost loved ones to the virus, and 'had hoped' for so much more – for longer with them, to be able to be with them at the end, to be able to attend their funeral and throw a party at the end. We are dealing with the grief of 'we had hoped'.

Perhaps we had made plans for April, or May, or for the summer, which have now been thrown into jeopardy by the virus. We were looking forward to an exciting moment or holiday, we were planning to see family and friends, we were attending events or festivals or gatherings that are usually a key part of our yearly rhythms. We had hoped for so much more.

Perhaps we have found the change to our rhythms and patterns deeply disturbing and are struggling to balance the new demands on our time and energy. We had hoped for so much more.

We know the pain of the grieving disciples as they walk the weary road.

And yet, Jesus comes into their midst.

This is the great joy of the resurrection stories in the gospels – they all point us towards being a people of hope. We cannot always be happy, we cannot always rejoice, we may need to grieve...but we do not grieve as a people without hope.

Rather, we look for the encounter with Jesus, even in the midst of pain and anguish. Even amongst broken dreams and lost hopes, we look for the stranger who joins us on the road of life's journey.

He is there, beside us. Telling stories, breaking bread, sharing love and grace.

These dark and difficult times are the hardest ones in which to recognise the stranger. I often wonder if Cleopas and his companion even looked up to see Jesus whilst they were on the road with him.

Perhaps they walked with the weight of grief, looking down, perhaps with their hoods up over their heads, not even looking at this man who walked with them.

Wherever you are today, on your journey. However you feel about the 'hopes' you have lost, Jesus wants to come and sit and eat with you.

Will you make him welcome?³

Prayers of intercession

As we gather here in worship we gather before the ultimate creator and in this moment of quiet we reflect on our world.

[Pause]

As we wonder at your creation,
we cannot help but see that through our actions and inactions,
our desires and our greed we have caused our world to hurt,
for that God, we are sorry.

We give thanks to you Lord, for you are good, your love endures forever.

Forgive us for the times this week
where we have not thought the things you would have us think,
have not said the words you would have us say
and have not acted in the way you would have us act.
In our moments of humanity where we have fallen short, we ask for your mercy.

Help us to see the world the way you see it,
to recognise your creative, loving hand
amidst all the uncertainty, pain and grief
and help us to walk this Earth in a way that shines your light
into the lives of all who we meet.

We give thanks to you Lord, for you are good, your love endures forever.
Amen.⁴

Hymn: 545 STF – Be Thou My Vision

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34rc2WHKZ28&feature=youtu.be>

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Be all else, but naught to me, save that thou art
Be thou my best thought in the day and by night;
Both waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

³ Reflection written by Tim Baker

The Vine at Home is compiled and produced by **twelvebaskets**

⁴ Prayers of intercession adapted from those written by Lauren Brabbs

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Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word;
Be thou ever with me, and i with thee, Lord.
Be thou my great Father; thy child let me be,
Be thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.

Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
Be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might;
Be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower,
O raise thou me heavenward, great power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise:
Be thou mine inheritance now and always:
Be thou and thou only the first in my heart:
O sovereign of heaven my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, thou heavens bright sun:,
O, grant me its joys after vict'ry is won:
Great heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be thou my vision, o ruler of all.

Blessing

Jesus comes,
he comes amongst us,
even as we seek him in our homes and our self-isolation.
Jesus comes today,
breaks bread with us,
wishes us peace,
and transforms us by his love.
Jesus comes.
Come Lord Jesus.
Amen.⁵

The Vine at home this week is adapted from The Vine Local Arrangement service

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⁵ Additional prayers by Tim Baker