

Easter 5 10th May 2020

Welcome and Call to worship

The Day of Resurrection!
Earth tell it out abroad;
the passover of gladness,
the passover of God
From death to life eternal,
from earth unto the sky,
our Christ hath brought us over
with hymns of victory.

We come from scattered lives to meet with God. Let us recognise his presence with us.

Alleluia Christ is Risen
He is Risen indeed Alleluia
As God's people we have gathered.
Let us worship him together.

Penitential Rite

Jesus Christ, shepherd of your sheep,
risen Master and triumphant Lord,
we come to you in sorrow for our sins,
and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength,
and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us.
Lord, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes,
as faithless and not believing.

In your mercy, forgive us.

Lord, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone,
and doubted our home in heaven.

In your mercy, forgive us.

Lord, hear us and help us.

May the God of love and power
forgive us and free us from our sins,
heal and strengthen us by his Spirit,
and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Our Gloria for today:

**Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.**

**Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

The Collect:

Risen Christ,
your wounds declare your love for the world
and the wonder of your risen life:
give us compassion and courage
to risk ourselves for those we serve,
to the glory of God the Father. **Amen**

Our 1st Reading

Acts 7:55-60 New International Version (NIV)

55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. **56** "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

57 At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, **58** dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

59 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." **60** Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

To greet the Gospel:

All I once held dear, built my life upon
All this world reveres, and wars to own
All I once thought gain I have counted loss

Spent and worthless now, compared to this
Knowing you, Jesus
Knowing you, there is no greater thing
You're my all, you're the best
You're my joy, my righteousness
And I love you, Lord

Now my heart's desire is to know you more
To be found in you and known as yours
To possess by faith what I could not earn
All-surpassing gift of righteousness
Knowing you, Jesus
Knowing you, there is no greater thing
You're my all, you're the best
You're my joy, my righteousness
And I love you, Lord

Graham Kendrick

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.
Glory to you, O Lord.

John 14:1-14 New International Version (NIV)

Jesus Comforts His Disciples

14 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. **2** My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? **3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. **4** You know the way to the place where I am going.”

Jesus the Way to the Father

5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. **7** If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

8 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? **10** Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. **11** Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. **12** Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. **13** And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. **14** You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Let's turn to our reading from Acts this morning.

The Church prescribes that Acts must be read in these weeks after Easter - so that we hear about the early Church gaining ground and taking shape.

We have focussed on our Gospel readings until now - the Lord who says doubt no longer but believe, the Lord who

makes himself known to us in the breaking of bread, and the Good Shepherd who calls each one of us by name.

But it is not by accident that the Church invites us today, to set aside time to pay attention also - to the cost of discipleship. Stephen - whom we see stoned today - has chosen to serve God with grace and power, and he is stoned to death on a trumped-up charge.

The truth is that real life - and the living out of the promises and joy of Easter - can be anything but easy.

Stephen is first mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as one of seven **deacons** appointed by the Apostles to distribute food and charitable aid to poorer members of the community in the early church. He was executed, not for being obnoxious or criminal. He was executed for his 'blasphemous visions' "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." The kinds of things Scripture tells us about him are that he was "a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit," that he was "full of grace and power" and "did great wonders and signs among the people." Even to the council who put him on trial, Stephen's face had a strangely angelic look.

This morning's accounts of Stephen's martyrdom alert us again to the very real conflicts that can be introduced into human lives and relationships by coming to faith and faith in Jesus. Jesus warned that it would be so...

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you". Matt 5: 11-12

We may find living in England that we will never be martyred like Stephen for our beliefs - (well let's hope not anyway) - although believers are not so secure in that guarantee in some other parts of our world. But we may find here, that when we bear witness to God and God through Jesus Christ, a reaction comes.... we may be told when we may speak and when not (for faith is not a polite topic of conversation), what symbols of faith we may wear and display... and what not, we may live in an environment when it is considered acceptable - humorous even to make fun of and belittle our beliefs, and where we hear the names of God which we hold most holy used to blaspheme.... And if we do not conform we may find ourselves ostracised, on trial, unemployed... There are many ways in which we can be persecuted for our beliefs....

The Church knows this, and gives us days like today to think about it. To recognise not just the glory of the Word of God, but the cost of choosing to follow Jesus. Then, having seen both that glory and that cost, we are invited to say yes again to God and God's Word.

Whatever and who ever brings us first to faith - through prayer and study of the scriptures - our faith must grow and mature so that " full of faith and full of the Holy Spirit" we too, may be ready face the challenges of being counter cultural, of speaking the truth to power, of loving our enemies, of living the love of God and of neighbour... and even of facing persecution if it comes.

Prayer of response -

**Eternal God,
whose Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life:**

**grant us to walk in his way,
to rejoice in his truth,
and to share his risen life;
who is alive and reigns, now and for ever. Amen**

Our Declaration of Faith

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
All maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
All God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.

All Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.

All For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;

All he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

We believe in the Holy Spirit,

All the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

All With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.

He has spoken through the prophets.

All We believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**All We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession - Prepared by Michael Oliver (Shefford)

God of the universe we watch the world around us, where here in the Northern hemisphere, Spring announces itself with colourful flowers, and the leaves sprouting and growing on the branches where the birds sing. We thank you for the joy and appreciation that you put in our hearts at such sights.

We bring to you your church in all its complexity and its guidance that leads to your throne and the promise of life eternal. We ask that your Holy Spirit continues his support and work with ministers, and congregations however grand and ornate they may be, however simple and naive they may be. We are all brothers and sisters in your worldwide family whose commission is to love our neighbours. May the Comforter inspire us all in this role.

Lord in your mercy – **hear our prayer**

We bring to you all those in authority. Their task is not easy as they try and preserve the economies and health of the society in their care. Please guide their thoughts and actions to achieve a balance for the benefit of all.

Lord in your mercy – **hear our prayer**

We pray for all those who serve their community especially the health workers, and all those who put others first above their own safety. May your Spirit walk beside them and hold their hand as they go about their work.

Lord in your mercy –**hear our prayer**

We bring to you all those who are sick, who are worried, who grieve. We offer them up to you for your touch of healing and peace. We name in our hearts those known to us. We pray also, please turn your gaze upon those known only to you. Envelop all in your love and answer each individual need.

Lord in your mercy - **hear our prayer**

We pray for those who have left this life and trust they live now with you in your realm of light. We thank you for their lives and what they have meant to us their families and friends - we thank you for the gift of their lives on this earth.

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

Let's pray together the prayer that Jesus 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.

**Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

Notices and Birthdays

Our closing acclamation:

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He has given us new life and hope.

He has raised Jesus from the dead.

God has claimed us as his own.

He has brought us out of darkness.

He has made us light to the world.

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Blessing...

God the Father,

by whose love Christ was raised from the dead,
open to you who believe the gates of everlasting life.

Amen.

God the Son,

who in bursting from the grave has won a glorious victory,
give you joy as you share the Easter faith. **Amen.**

God the Holy Spirit,

who filled the disciples with the life of the risen Lord,
empower you and fill you with Christ's peace. **Amen.**

And the blessing ...

...and the sending

With the power that raised Jesus from the dead at work within you, go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Alleluia, alleluia.
In the name of Christ. Amen. Alleluia, alleluia.

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart

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

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
I ever with thee, and thou with me, Lord;
thou my great Father, and I thy true heir;
thou in me dwelling, and I in thy care.

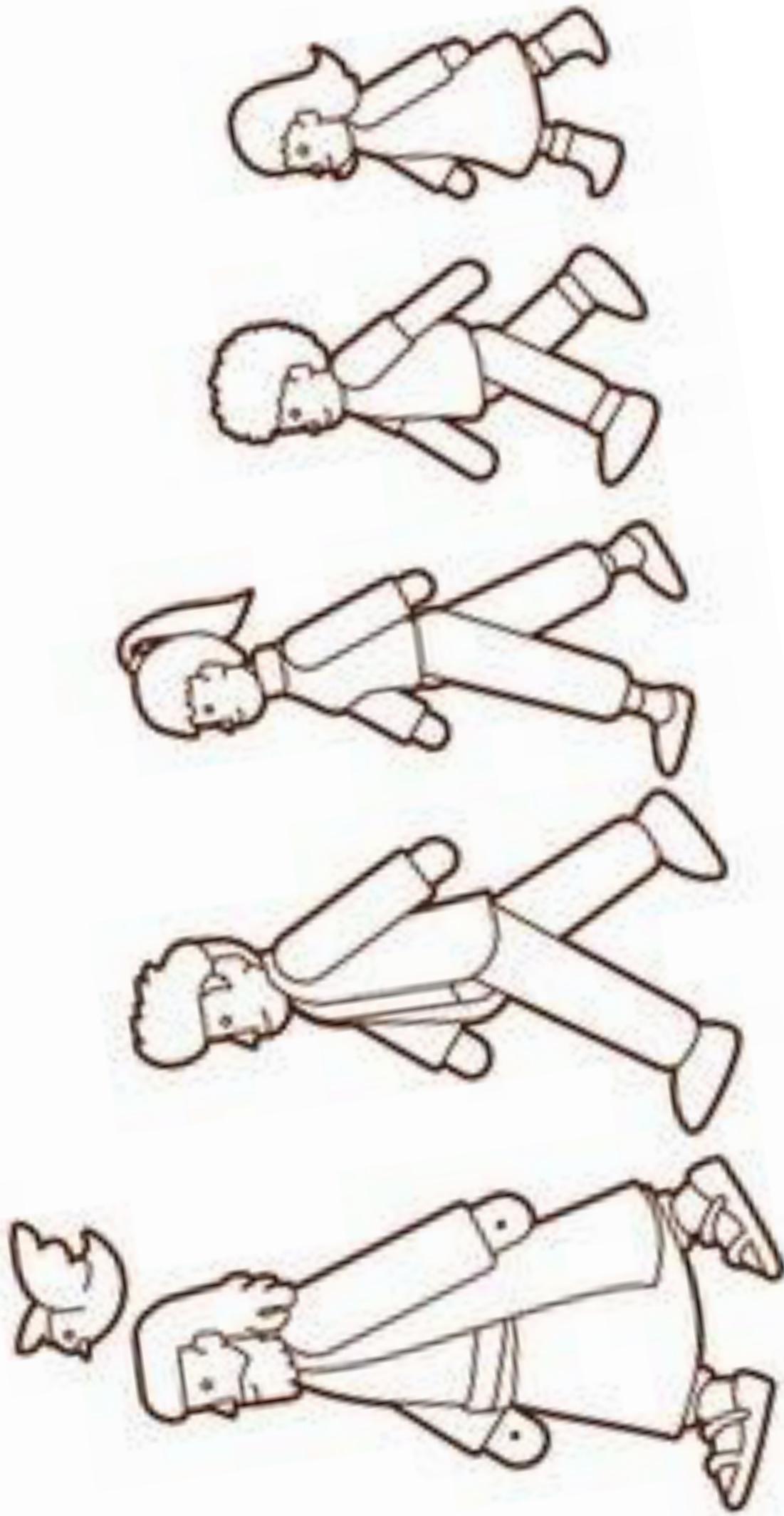
Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
be thou my armour, and be thou my might;
thou my soul's shelter, and thou my high tower:
raise thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.

Riches I need not, nor all the world's praise:
thou mine inheritance through all my days;
thou, and thou only, the first in my heart;
High King of heaven, my treasure thou art!

High King of heaven, when battle is done,
grant heaven's joys to me, O bright heaven's sun;
Christ of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

Irish, ca. 8th century; trans. Mary Byrne (1880-1931) versified, Eleanor Hull (1860-1935)

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I have decided to follow Jesus

Can you unscramble these names and titles of Jesus?

suseJ

itshrC

noS fo odG

avSiuro

gniK fo gnsiK

streaM

droL fo orsLd

dreaB fo eLif

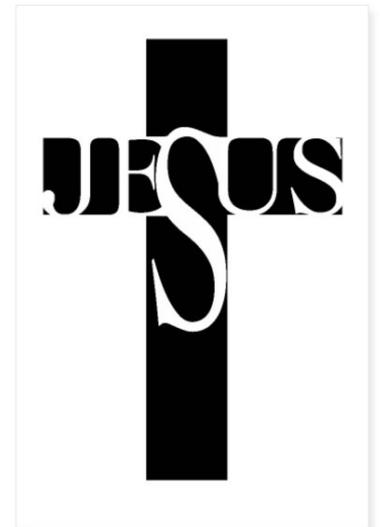
chreaTe

Euelmnam

Hhig tsierp

bmaL fo odG

hiasMes



Can you think of any more?

Following in Jesus' footsteps

*(draw round and colour your own foot
and write your own "following Jesus" prayer!)*