

## Morning Service of the Word

### Welcome and Opening Prayer

#### SONG

#### Introduction

O Lord, open our lips:

**and our mouth shall sing your praise.**

O God, make speed to save us

**O Lord, make haste to help us.**

Glory be to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;

**as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.**

Praise the Lord:

**The Lord's name be praised.**

#### Confession

A moment of silence:

Christ our Passover Lamb has been offered for us. So, let us rejoice by putting away all malice and evil and confessing our sins with a sincere and true heart.

**God our Father, we are sorry for the times when we have used your gifts carelessly and acted ungratefully.**

**We are sorry when we enjoy the fruits of the harvest but forget that you have given them to us.**

**We are sorry that, while we belong to a people who are full and satisfied, we ignore the cry of the hungry.**

**We are sorry that we are thoughtless and do not care enough for the world you have made.**

**We are sorry that we store up goods for ourselves alone as if there were no God in heaven.**

**Father, in your mercy, forgive us and help us. Amen.**

#### Absolution

May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins and restore us in his service to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

#### SONG

## **Bible Reading**

### **1 John 3:1-7 - New International Version**

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## **SONG**

### **Gospel Reading**

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

### **Luke 24: 36-48**

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## Sermon

### Easter 3 (2021)

#### Luke 24: 36-48

#### Jesus Appears after the Resurrection

I hate school Ofsted inspections. In the main I don't think that they are particularly positive, helpful experiences – and I still think that after 11 years retirement! My dream would be to put some of these 'expert' inspectors in front of a really wearing, difficult class, where many of the pupil's behaviour is a constant challenge and the ability range of the children is vast, to see how they got on – not just for one lesson mind you, but for at least half a term. Then we could see how 'expert' they are! Alas, it's never going to be!

But it is so much easier to look on from the side lines and criticise isn't it? So, what's our criticism of the disciples' reaction in our Gospel reading today when Jesus appears to them? After all, in verse 44 Jesus reminds them that he had already told them what was going to happen to him when he was with them before his death!

They'd already been given the information. Yet, even though he appeared in a bodily form, which they seemed to recognise, they thought that he was a ghost; and we have words like, startled, frightened, troubled, still did not believe.

We know the body of Jesus wasn't a figment of the imagination because the disciples touched it and he ate with them: nor was it merely a restored human body like Lazarus' whom Jesus raised from the dead and who died again.

Jesus was able to appear and disappear at will because this body was immortal – the kind of body we will be given at the final resurrection. So, if Jesus suddenly appeared beside me now, or sitting in one of the pews, or, when the day returns and we can share a cup of tea and cake, he appears out of the blue and asks for a piece of cake, what words would describe our response.

Do we think that we would handle the situation any better than those first disciples? Because, in actual fact, we are far more informed in our time than the disciples were in theirs. Like them we have the writings of the Old Testament, all of which points to the Messiah. For example, his role as a prophet was foretold in Deuteronomy 18: 15-20 which roughly says, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me (Moses) from your own brothers. You must listen to him. I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.' Jesus' sufferings were prophesied in Psalm 22 (an extract from verses 6-8 says, 'I am scorned by men and despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads: he trusts in the Lord; let the Lord rescue him') and again in Isaiah 53 (an extract says, 'For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death') Anyone who knows the unfolding of the crucifixion events will recognise these words.

And his resurrection was predicted in Psalm 16 (an extract says, 'you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.') and in Isaiah 53 again (an extract says, 'After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied.') But, unlike the disciples, we also have the New Testament with the testimonies of so many people as well as inspired Godly teachings, through writers like Paul. It's true that some of the teachings in the Bible are extremely difficult to understand: and, whether you agree or not, I am convinced that the devil keeps our minds dull and unresponsive to God's Holy Word for as long as he possibly can – and there's good reason for that!

The devil absolutely hates God and is always in the business of, not only making sure that as many people as possible are diverted, distracted, unable to grasp and understand God's word so that they never come to know God or his unending love for them, but also he is always using any means possible to crush God's committed followers so that they lose their faith and turn away from him. That is the devil's sole purpose for existing. He hates God and anyone who chooses to follow Jesus. But, hallelujah, Jesus defeated the devil on the cross and so he is able to open our minds to the scriptures so that we can understand them (verse 45) giving us access to all the blessings and goodness he wants to lavish upon us. This is a fact to hold on to. Now, going back to Jesus suddenly appearing in bodily form: I think that we'd most likely react as those disciples did: startled, frightened, unable to grasp what we were seeing. But should we?

Teachers know when an Ofsted inspection is coming and, no doubt, most of them take extra effort in preparing and delivering lessons for the inspectors observing them. But, in fact, any conscientious, dedicated teacher worth their salt will always ensure that they prepare and deliver the best possible lessons every day for their pupils, regardless of an inspector being in the room or not!

I would think it most unlikely that Jesus will appear to us in bodily form to observe how we are behaving and handling situations in his name. However, he is always with us in his spirit form through the Holy Spirit. He dwells within us and so he knows intimately what we are up to all the time. But he's not like an Ofsted inspector. Yes, they report on good practices they see but their focus is to highlight faults as much as anything else. And they are very detached from us.

Not so with Jesus. Jesus is there to keep lifting us up when we fall. Jesus is there with words of encouragement. Jesus is there to give us strength to face the day. Yes, he will chastise us when we do wrong but to build us up and make us more holy. Unlike an Ofsted inspector, Jesus cares for us deeply and only wants the very best for us. We may not be able to SEE Jesus among us here this morning, or when we go home, or when we get up tomorrow, but his presence is still with us for he promises never to leave us.

The phrase 'Big Brother is watching you' somehow carries a threat. 'God is watching us' should be a massive comfort to all who follow Jesus. Let's cherish our wonderful God who is constantly by our side and while accepting us as we are inspires us to be so much more to the glory of his name.

## **The Creed**

**We believe in God the Father, by whose plan earth and heaven sprang into being and all created things began.**

**We believe in Christ the Saviour, Son of God in human frame, virgin-born, the child of Mary, upon whom the Spirit came.**

**Christ, who on the cross forsaken, like a lamb to slaughter led; suffered under Pontius Pilate, and descended to the dead.**

**We believe in Jesus risen, heaven's King to rule and reign, to the Father's side ascended till as judge he comes again.**

**We believe in God the Spirit; in one church, below and above: saints of God in one communion, one in holiness and love.**

**So, by faith, our sins forgiven, Christ our Saviour, Lord and Friend, we shall rise with him in glory to a life that knows no end.**

## **Peace**

### **Intercessions**

#### **Intercessions for Easter 3 (2021)**

Risen Lord, you set ablaze the hearts of your disciples with awe and wonder at your resurrection.

Open the eyes of all of us who belong to your worldwide Church to the truth of this astounding news. Help us to live our lives as resurrection people, firmly convinced of, and believing in, the fact that that same resurrection power which brought you back from the dead, is available to us in our small lives, if we would just reach out and receive it.

We pray for church leaders, particularly those who are experiencing 'burn out' at this time. Fill them, we ask, with resurrection energy and vigour that they may be equipped to fulfil your will for them, wherever you call them to be.

For us here at St James, set our hearts ablaze in the here and now with awe and wonder at the magnificence of who you are, so that we will be empowered to witness to your saving grace wherever we go.

Risen Lord, you see and judge the motives of all rulers and leaders, whether great or small.

We hear of so many men and women who misuse and abuse the power they were elected into and so we ask that you raise up and sustain with your Holy Spirit people of integrity for the responsibilities of government: people who will leave self behind as they strive to ensure the needs of all under their care are met.

In so many nations there is unrest and discord which frequently erupts into violence. Through your resurrection power may there be a new flourishing of peace and justice.

Risen Lord, our community will liven up again as the schools start back tomorrow. In the mingling and mixing of lots of people we ask for safety and protection from the pandemic. We pray that everyone will act responsibly for the good of all.

We pray for Sharon and her team as they start up face to face After School Club again. Thank you for her hard work putting in place procedures which will ensure the well-being of the children who use the facility.

We ask your blessing on Chris, hopefully refreshed from his holiday, as he becomes once again embroiled in the myriad of demands made upon him by so many working in his orbit.

Risen Lord, may your resurrection power be with those who are ill, whether in body, mind, or spirit. We silently name the now.....draw them into your healing and peace.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**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.**

### **SONG**

### **Blessing and Dismissal**

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