

Sacredise Daily Worship

Personal Worship Resources for the Week:

30 April - 06 May 2017

Thought for the Week:

One of the great privileges of the faith is that we get to participate with Jesus in what God is doing in the world. This is far more than just praying a personal prayer to receive God's life or 'doing evangelism' to 'get people saved'. It's watching to see what God is already doing, where God's life is already breaking out, and then responding to this by co-creating, co-caring and co-welcoming people. This is how we, and those whom God touches through us, really connect with and experience God's life. The big challenge this week, then, is to discover where in your world resurrection is beginning - or continuing - to break out. But, then we also need to respond to these signs of resurrection. We need to ask how God wants us to participate, to notice, to communicate and to spread the life of God.

So often we feel that we have to make things happen, and that the initiative begins with us. The resurrection helps us to recognise that the initiative is always God's. God's life is always breaking out whether we see it or not. Our task is not to make anything happen, but to respond – to get on board with – what God is already doing. This is a liberating and empowering thought, but also a challenging one. We can choose to do our own thing, or nothing, but if we really want to encounter God and be involved in Gospel work, we'd better recognise and respond to God's thing!

This week we seek to investigate where resurrection is at work in our world and to respond.

Sunday 30 April 2017

Reading: Luke 24:13-35

Reflection: The Gospel of Luke doesn't tell us why Cleopas and his unnamed friend were travelling to Emmaus, but once they had encountered the Risen Christ, they quickly changed their plans and rushed back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples. It was clear that

the experience of the resurrection changed everything for them, and they could not go about their lives as before.

Two responses stand out in today's reading. The first is the change in priorities. Whatever business had been important enough to take these two men to Emmaus quickly became less important in the light of Jesus' appearance. When faced with the resurrection priorities change. When we become resurrection people, our lives cannot help but be rooted in the life and mission of God.

The second response that these two disciples made was to rush back and share their experience with the others. God's life always draws us to connect with others and to share the life we have experienced. This may mean telling those around us about what we have experienced, or it may mean silently serving and loving them so that they experience God's life for themselves through us.

How does Jesus' resurrection change your priorities today? And how can you share your experience of God's life with others?

Practice for Today: The first believers understood the importance of community. They gathered in order to share their experiences of God's life with each other, but also to create a community in which others could see God's life at work. This is why it is so important for us to gather with other Christ-followers in churches and small groups. We cannot effectively share God's life alone. Today, try to make some time to connect with other believers, even if it's only by email or a phone call.

Breath-Prayer for Today: Your life, O God, changes my priorities and connects me more deeply with others.

Monday 01 May 2017

Reading: Psalm 134

Reflection: For many centuries the Temple in Jerusalem was the centre of Israel's worship. Many scholars believe that as worshippers journeyed up the mountain to the Temple, they would sing Psalms, known as Psalms of Ascent or Pilgrimage Psalms. Today's reading is one of these songs, and it calls the people to prepare themselves to bring their praise and prayer to God. There is also a special mention of the priests whose job it was to continue to

serve in the Temple through the night when the main services of the day were done. The implication is that all service offered to God, whether in public worship, or in private devotion, is an act of true worship. But, in response, there is a prayer for the blessing of God, who was believed to dwell in the Temple at Jerusalem, and whose blessing would flow out into the rest of the nation, and ultimately the world. This short Psalm, then, reflects the sense of worship as a conversation, with God calling God's people to draw near, the people responding in praise and devotion, God responding in blessing, and the people, as they go back out into the world, carrying God's blessing with them.

As we meditate on the resurrection of Jesus, we are called into a similar life-giving conversation with God. In Christ's death and rising, God begins the conversation, and we respond by opening ourselves in faith to this new life. Then, as we draw close to God, so God's life floods into us, and, as we go out into our daily lives, so God's life flows through us to touch others. The ebb and flow of receiving from God and responding is like breathing, and it is just as life-sustaining.

How can you be more intentional about opening yourself to God's resurrection life today?

Practice for Today: Throughout the ages, as this Psalm shows, God's people have been inspired and sustained by the practice of praise. When we praise God we celebrate who God is, and we open ourselves to the life and presence of God. Today, allow your praises to be an intentional practice of opening to God.

Breath-Prayer for Today: I praise you, God, for your life that flows into me, and through me to others.

Tuesday 02 May 2017

Reading: Proverbs 8:32-9:6

Reflection: We have encountered Woman Wisdom – the Old Testament counterpart to John's 'Logos' – before. She offers a different perspective on how God interacts with human beings, and it's a helpful doorway to understand aspects of the resurrection of Jesus. Verse 35 of today's reading makes the profound claim that those who find Woman Wisdom find life and gain God's favour. But, those who hate her love death. In the first verses of Chapter 9 we

see how eager Wisdom is to win people over. She prepares a sumptuous feast and sends her messengers out to invite people to join her. Those who respond to her invitation discover the "way of understanding" which is the way that leads us to fullness of life.

This invitation is the same as the call of the resurrection. Believing in the resurrection is not just about life after death. It's about finding life now. It's about living the Jesus way and embracing the values, priorities, worldview, and understanding that Jesus embodied. Once we have been touched by the truth of the resurrection, we discover a wisdom that is of a different order from that of human understanding and perspectives. Paul describes this as the 'mind of Christ'. And, as we allow Jesus' wisdom to guide and direct our lives, so we enter into a quality of life that is the most abundant, meaningful and vibrant that is possible.

How can you respond to Woman Wisdom's invitation today?

Practice for Today: The study of the Scriptures is a doorway to wisdom, not because of the information that the Bible contains, but because, as Jesus taught, the Scriptures point us to him. As we spend time immersing ourselves in the wisdom of the Bible, so we sink our roots ever deeper into the Jesus way, and our lives are changed to reflect the wisdom of God more and more. Today spend time absorbing the Bible's Christ-reflecting wisdom.

Breath-Prayer for Today: I hear your call, O God, and I accept Woman Wisdom's invitation to feast with her and grow wise.

Wednesday 03 May 2017

Reading: John 21:1-14

Reflection: It seems strange that after encountering the Risen Jesus twice, Peter should return to his old occupation of fishing. Perhaps this was because he still expected Jesus to reject him for his denial. Or maybe it was because the reality of the resurrection had not fully taken hold of him. Certainly it seems that he had not yet grasped the significance of Jesus' resurrection for his life as a disciple and as one who was called to share the news of God's Reign with the world. Whatever the case, the scenario that John describes in today's reading is almost exactly the same as the one that Luke tells about at the first call of Peter (Luke 5:1-11). We can't

know if John was deliberately trying to connect Jesus' reinstatement of Peter with Jesus' first call, but we do know that the large, unexpected catch of fish was symbolic of what Jesus wanted Peter to do as a disciple of The Way.

Another surprising feature of today's reading is that, even after the great catch of fish, it wasn't Peter who recognised Jesus, but "the disciple whom Jesus loved". It is likely that John was giving us an insight into Peter's state of mind. He was clearly still wrestling with the guilt of his failure - as is revealed in the conversation with Jesus that follows today's reading. In his grief and regret Peter had closed his heart and mind. He was blinded to Jesus' presence, and to the possibility of forgiveness. He retreated back into old ways, and allowed himself no sense of hope or possibility. Yet, in the midst of his despair, Jesus appeared and restored him. It's good to know that there is nothing we can do that places us beyond the reach of Jesus' grace and life. But, we need to be careful not to allow our guilt and grief to shut our hearts to the extent that we become unable to recognise Jesus when he reaches out to us.

In what ways do you need Jesus to free you from guilt or regret today? Are you open to receive his grace and life?

Practice for Today: There is tremendous power in the practice of honest and humble confession. It is when we try to avoid dealing with our wrongdoing that we shut ourselves off from others and from God. But, when we get real with God and acknowledge where we need forgiveness, we are able to receive the grace we need, and make our way toward healing. If you are wrestling with guilt or regret today, allow confession to free you.

Breath-Prayer for Today: Forgive me, Jesus, for the times when I have denied you and failed you.

Thursday 04 May 2017

Reading: 1 Peter 2:9-12

Reflection: Peter's affirmation that we are "immigrants and strangers" in the world is often taken to refer to our destiny being in an otherworldly heaven after we die. The idea is that since we belong in heaven, we are aliens in this world. But, the Scriptures do not teach that we spend eternity in some other place. On the

contrary, the Bible speaks of God's dwelling being with us in the renewed earth that is united with heaven. When we place Peter's words in context we see that he's actually speaking about how live in this world. We are "immigrants and strangers" not in the sense that we belong somewhere else, but in the sense that we already see and experience a whole different world from the one in which we live. Where others live in a world that is built on power-games, accumulation of possessions, and individual pleasure and self-protection, we live in a world that is built on the values and priorities of resurrection - service, self-giving, and simplicity.

As we embody the values of God's Reign, avoiding what Peter calls "worldly desires" so we reveal this "other world" - the world of God's Reign - to those around us. But, it's not easy to live out of step with the society around us. We can only do it because God, in God's grace, has made us a chosen, holy people who belong to God. God has given us mercy, and called us into God's light, giving us God's Spirit to empower and guide us. This means that, even though we may be mocked by others, as they see God's grace and life revealed in us, so the time often comes when they are drawn to God's light because of us. While we cannot make this happen, we continue to live the Jesus way in hope that some may be touched.

How can you live as an immigrant and stranger in your world today?

Practice for Today: To be a follower of Jesus means to be a witness to God's life and to God's Reign. Sometimes this will involve telling our story, or sharing wisdom from the Scriptures. But, most often it involves living by different values, priorities and goals from those of the world around us. It is as people notice how our behaviour brings healing to those around us, and fills us with peace and joy in spite of tough circumstances, that they will be touched by God's light. Let your life be a light to others today.

Breath-Prayer for Today: As I live as a citizen of your Reign, so I shine the light of your grace and life to others, O God.

Friday 05 May 2017

Reading: Exodus 3:16-22; 4:18-20

Reflection: Moses was certainly surprised by God's appearance in the burning bush, but he must have been staggered by what God

called him to do – to become a liberator for God’s people. In Egypt, the events that would bring the Israelites their freedom were already in motion, but they had no clue that God was even aware of their suffering. Moses must have felt that what God wanted to achieve through him was an impossible dream. The idea that the Israelites would not just be freed, but would “strip the Egyptians of their wealth” – with the participation of the Egyptians themselves – must have sounded completely insane. Yet, somehow Moses must have believed, at least a little, and so he started on a journey that would take the rest of his life, that would bring him great frustration and suffering, but that would free a nation and show the world that God is always at work bringing life and justice.

The resurrection life of God is always like this. Long before we know that God is even aware of our struggles, God is already at work to bring light into the darkness and life out of death. Sometimes we cannot begin to conceive of how God can restore us, and it feels absurd to hold on to hope. But, as resurrection people, we know that all is never lost. And we also know that God often seeks to use us to bring life into our part of the world in whatever small way we can. We may not be called to be liberators like Moses, but we can set one or two other people free through our loving acceptance, support, encouragement, or giving of our time or resources to help them.

Who needs you to be a liberator to them today?

Practice for Today: The life of faith is never lived in isolation from our relationships with others. Rather, it is how our lives impact others that really reveals the depth and health of our faith. When we are truly immersed in the resurrection life of Jesus, we cannot help but serve others in whatever way we are able in order to bring life to them. Today, try to notice when someone in your life needs a touch of God’s life, and try to be God’s channel to free and heal them.

Breath-Prayer for Today: Your life is always at work in and through me, O God, even when I don’t see it.

Saturday 06 May 2017

Reading: Luke 15:1-7

Reflection: The Gospel reading in this Sunday’s Lectionary speaks of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Today we get a glimpse of what

this means. Luke draws a stark contrast between Jesus and some of the religious leaders who were more concerned with ritual purity than caring for those in need. These men were deeply offended by Jesus’ habit of spending time with those who were considered unclean. In reply to their challenge, Jesus told a parable about a man who left his herd to go in search of one lost sheep. The premise of this story is quite ridiculous. What farmer would leave a whole flock untended and vulnerable to predators to find one animal? This would be foolish. But, in Jesus’ characteristically provocative way, it demonstrates God’s radically inclusive grace.

Many people in church try to use this passage to get their leaders to do what they want, claiming that they are the one lost sheep whom their pastors should be seeking out. But, to abuse this passage in this way is to be more like the Pharisees than the lost sheep. The message of Jesus’ story is that it is those outside of the church - those who are often rejected and condemned by religious people - who need God’s grace the most. And it is to these people that we are called to go in order to invite them into God’s radically inclusive grace.

Who needs you to reach out to them in acceptance, love and grace today?

Practice for Today: Many of those who stay away from church do so because all they have come to expect from the church is legalism, condemnation, and dislike. What a sad reflection on Jesus’ mission and message this is! Even a cursory reading of the Gospels should convince us that our primary task is to welcome everyone with the love and acceptance of Christ. Today, greet and welcome everyone you encounter with kindness and grace.

Breath-Prayer for Today: As you have sought me and found me, O God, so I seek to reveal your love to everyone I meet.

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