

*Christ Church New
Southgate & Friern Barnet
24 April 2022*

Welcome

Come, let us find the risen Lord.
Come with your whole self,
with your worries and your successes,
your fears and your joys,
your questions and your answers.
Come, all who are excited and all who are
anxious.
Come, all who are confident and all who are
searching.
God will meet us here.

Song: Give thanks to the Lord, our God and
Song: When I gaze up to the stars

Reading: John 20.19-31

¹⁹ It was late that Sunday evening, and the disciples were gathered together behind locked doors, because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities. Then Jesus came and stood among them. "Peace be with you," he said. ²⁰ After saying this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy at seeing the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you." ²² Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive people's sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

²⁴ One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (called the Twin), was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

Thomas said to them, "Unless I see the scars of the nails in his hands and put my finger

on those scars and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

²⁶ A week later the disciples were together again indoors, and Thomas was with them. The doors were locked, but Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and look at my hands; then reach out your hand and put it in my side. Stop your doubting, and believe!"

²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Do you believe because you see me? How happy are those who believe without seeing me!"

³⁰ In his disciples' presence Jesus performed many other miracles which are not written down in this book. ³¹ But these have been written in order that you may believe^a that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through your faith in him you may have life.

Prayer

In the middle of our busy lives, **we seek Jesus.**

In our caring and providing,
in dreaming and hoping, **we seek Jesus.**
In our seeking after truth
and our longing to know more fully, **we seek Jesus.**

In the troubles of the world, in conflict and distress,

we come to find peace.

In our challenges and our hopes, in all we wish was different,
we come to find peace.

When we don't know the answers,
when we don't know what is true,
in all our searching and longing,
Jesus, meet us we pray.

Amen.

Song: Open the eyes of my heart, Lord

Active Prayer

Open our eyes, (*cover eyes with hands*)
we want to see Jesus. (*uncover eyes*)
Open our ears, (*cover ears with hands*)
we want to hear Jesus. (*uncover ears*)
Open our hands, (*clench hands into fists*)
we want to reach Jesus. (*open hands and reach out*)
Open our hearts, (*hands on heart*)
we want to love Jesus. (*make welcome gesture*)

How do we know God?

Think and reflect on:

- How do we know about God?
- If you met God face to face, what would you ask?

Song: Come, people of the Risen King

Sermon: Sent by Jesus

There is a TV show called 'sort your life out' which Stacey Solomon presents. In each episode a cluttered home is sorted out in a big warehouse, 75% given away and the home is redecorated. It makes for a marvellous tv programme. One of the families included had a lovely mum – I'll call her Bev - who shared part of her life story who said: "I was known as the young lady with bowel cancer, everyone knew." Bev carried her pain, and the story of her pain around in her body. Bev was known by the scars she had.

In John 20, Jesus is risen from the dead – first he meets Mary at the tomb, and now in verse 19 Jesus arrives on the scene with the disciples. The disciples are together. First Jesus appears to an individual, one of his female disciples. Now he appears to the group. In the same way, Jesus meets us as individuals, speaks to our pain and hurt and brings new life. Then we grow in the

community, in the body of the church as a group of those who follow Jesus. Jesus' message is to us as individuals and as a church.

In every gospel there is a slightly different account of who meets Jesus in what way. In John, Mary Magdalene finds the empty tomb, she tells two male disciples who come and check but they find nothing. Mary stays and meets Jesus who she mistakes for a gardener. Mary tells the disciples that she has seen the empty tomb and has seen Jesus risen from the dead and nobody believes her. It was an idle tale. A story of nonsense. And yet we find the disciples meeting in fear. Meeting with the doors shut, for they were afraid of the Jewish authorities. Why? If Jesus the leader of their group had been executed, might they not come for them next? But not as individuals do they hide, but as a community. To this community locked in fear, Jesus appears. Jesus appears and brings peace. To every situation of fear, Jesus stands among us and speaks his peace. Peace that is the shalom of God, all the blessings of the kingdom of God: joy, love, kindness, healing, salvation.

We meet Jesus, risen from the dead, glorified: able to go through locked doors but still with a body for it is by his scars he is known. For many of us, we are known by our scars. For some our shoulders are hunched with the experience of bad relationships, financial pressure, family expectations. We can be known for our bitterness, painful experiences, and grief. Into each of these incredible burdens, we recognise the presence of Christ. For in every heavy heart, sorrowful soul and tearful eyes Jesus stands among us. Jesus-suffering-Christ who took on flesh, felt our pain, walked our path, and died in agony as the saviour of the world. To all of our scars and pain, heartache and poor mental health: Jesus stands with us and says peace be with you.

Bev from the tv programme had experienced the worst of life and survived. She then began to protect herself; she threw nothing away and kept everything. She layered her home so deep in clutter that she was almost locked in.

The suffering Christ is known and recognised by his scars, but he is not contained by them. The story doesn't end here, does it? Nor does it end with the disciples' happiness and joy. For then Jesus says peace to you again. As the Father sent me, so I send you.

The Christian life is not to know suffering, suffer and identify with Christ in his suffering alone. There is a next step. Jesus then commissions this scared bunch of disciples to be sent. Sent like he was by God the father. Jesus calls this little church to action, to mission, to sort their life out. We meet God in our pain and in our fears. He gives us peace, and the gift of the Holy Spirit and then sends us, not to stay stuck in pain but to move out. To move beyond the locked doors, move beyond a house stuffed with clutter and crack on with telling people about God's love, mercy and grace.

I wonder if the church has ever been so known for its scars, it forgot that there is another part of the story, that we are called to tell other people about God? Some churches are broken by suffering, a dodgy pastor, a bad youth minister, power hungry deacons. Some churches become very small and become entrenched and known for this pain. What has Christ Church become known for? What suffering has overtaken us so that we cannot receive the peace of Christ?

It's time to allow Christ's peace to fill in, and draw over our scars, to heal them and for us to be filled with joy. It's time for a shared life as the body of Christ. It's time to allow God's peace to send us into our community and the world. It's hard to break out of old habits, it's hard not to be defined by pain but Jesus calls us to a new day, a day where we are sent just

as he was to declare God's love to the world. It's time for us to be known differently, it's time for us to be sent into the world, equipped by the Spirit, to preach Christ risen and to see his kingdom come. It's time for us to sort our life out and be sent by Jesus into the world.

Song: Let us kneel at Calvary,

Prayers for the world

Song: Oh Lord, my God

Blessing