



Circuit Contact

Welcome to our Circuit Worship for

7th April 2024

prepared by Rev Eleanor Smith

Worship in the following locations:

Ipstones Methodist Church - at 10.30am with Rev J Smith

Wetley Rocks Methodist Church - at 10.30am with Rev Colin Cooper

Rudyard Methodist Church - at 11.00am with Heather Haywood

Endon Methodist Church - at 10.00am with Gill Meredith

Trinity, Leek- at 10.30am with Rev Julie Hassall

Wellspring Cheadle - at 10.30 with Denis Johnson

Waterhouses- at 6.30pm with Mark Fallows

The Gathering at St.Andrews, Cheddleton - at 4pm

Boundary Methodist Church - at 6pm with Rev Eleanor Smith

Onecote Methodist Church- at 11am with Rev Eleanor Smith

St Andrews Methodist Church, Cheddleton - at 11am with Lynne Bradbury



Call to worship

Come and worship the Lord

For he is risen

Come and praise his name

For he is risen

Come and be filled with joy

For he is risen

Hymn [Low in the grave he lay. Lyric video \(StF 305\) - YouTube](#)

Prayer

Risen Lord, you revealed yourself
to Mary in the garden at dawn.

Risen Lord, you revealed yourself
to the fisherfolk as they toiled in vain at their work.

Risen Lord, you revealed yourself
to the walkers on the road to Emmaus as they welcomed you into their home.

Risen Lord, you revealed yourself
to Thomas when he felt the scars in your body.

Risen Lord, reveal yourself afresh to us
Amen

Confession

If we have fallen into despair, **Lord forgive us**
If we have failed to hope in you, **Lord forgive us**
If we have been fearful of death, **Lord forgive us**
If we have forgotten the victory of Christ, **Lord forgive us**
May the living God raise you from despair,
give you victory over sin and set you free in Christ
Amen

Reading **1 John 1:1 – 2:2** [1 John 1:1-2:2 NIV - The Incarnation of the Word of Life - Bible Gateway](#)

Hymn STF 314 **This joyful Eastertide** [Bing Videos](#)

Reading **John 20: 19-31**
[John 20:19-31 NIV - Jesus Appears to His Disciples - On the - Bible Gateway](#)

Reflection

The Easter story ended last week with the women saw an angel in the tomb, and heard him say “He has been raised, he is not here. Go and tell his disciples”but they said nothing to anyone because they were afraid (Mark 16:1-8). We have to turn to the other Gospel writers to hear about Jesus appearing to his friends.

The account from John is a fast-moving event. On the evening of the Sunday the disciples were together behind a locked door – they feared persecution from the Jewish leaders. Perhaps a reasonable fear after the way that their master had been so cruelly treated and they were known associates of him. And Jesus appeared. There is so much in a few verses. How did he get into a locked room? What did Jesus look like? Was his physical appearance different to that before the crucifixion – was it so different that Mary Magdalene in the garden and the companions on the road to Emmaus didn’t recognise him?

What I find significant is that the risen Christ is still wounded – he keeps the marks of the nails – his physical body is not perfectly restored, it carries the scars of wounds and death. And especially important, it was because of the wounds, his disciples recognised him. When we come into the presence of Christ we carry wounds, often hidden to others, but scars we carry. Christ may not heal the wounds but transforms them.

There is so much in this story

- the reaction of the ten disciples – Thomas and Judas were not there – they knew it was Jesus because he showed them the marks of crucifixion and they were overjoyed
- The outpouring of the Holy Spirit - Jesus breathed on them and said ‘receive the Holy Spirit’.
- Three times in these verses, Jesus says ‘Peace be with you’.
- And Jesus talks about sin and forgiveness

Poor Thomas, what a reputation he has – doubting Thomas. He was more ‘honest Thomas’. In some verses from John 14, Jesus tells his friends ‘you know the way to the place where I am going’. It was Thomas who pipes up: ‘Lord we don’t know where you are going. How can we know the way? Maybe his friends thought the same, but Thomas was the one to ask the question.

After the death of Jesus, Thomas wanted to test what he was told about the resurrection, by seeing some evidence. Rather than being a doubter, he wanted to know for himself that he could really trust what the other disciples now believed. And that is not a bad thing.

Let’s put ourselves in Thomas’s shoes. Thomas had left the others at what must have felt like a wake. He returned to a party, as the disciples described what they had experienced. It continued like that for a week; they were celebrating that they had seen Jesus alive, whilst Thomas couldn’t be sure. He had to see and touch for himself. Maybe he wanted to believe, to share in their joy. Maybe he was worried that if Jesus did turn up, what would Jesus think of him because he didn’t trust what his friends said? It must have been quite a dreadful week for Thomas. And then unexpectedly, Jesus did appear, and the room fell silent. Did Jesus go straight to Thomas and hold out his hands, as if he knew what Thomas needed? ‘My Lord and my God’, Thomas said.

What do you need to believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God? Scripture is a good starting point. What does the Bible tell us about Jesus and how Christians should live? The last verses of today’s Gospel reading tell us that although Jesus did a lot more than is written down, here is enough for us to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.

Then we have the tradition of the church – how important is it to you that our faith and the way we worship and practice our faith goes back centuries, not just to John Wesley of the 18th century but to the beginning of the Christian church? We benefit from the wisdom and creativity of Christians over time and across the world. The churches, Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant continue to use the words of faith as found in the Nicene Creed that was agreed in the 4th century. From earliest times, Christians have shared bread and wine in memory of Christ’s death and baptised as a sign of faith – these are the two sacraments that Jesus instigated and instructed his followers to continue.

And there is experience – Thomas heard what his friends had experienced that Sunday evening, but he wanted to know for himself. Both are of value – hearing and reading about Jesus and the lives of Christians are tremendously important, but our faith cannot be borrowed, it has to be a personal experience of God

Jesus said to Thomas ‘because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen, yet have believed.

Prayers

Let us pray

For those who know it is the Easter season , but do not join in the celebration.

For those who walk in the sunshine but cannot feel the warmth.

For those who see the flowers, but fail to appreciate their beauty.

We pray for all those in need of joy this day

We pray for those who feel unloved today:

Who have experienced a breakdown in a relationship,

For those who have never had the joy of being loved and loving another.

For those who do not know the love of Christ.

We pray for those in need of love this day

We pray for those weighed down by grief today.

For those burdened by guilt because of their wrong decisions and actions.

For those who pray for their release from their captivity because of harsh political regimes.

For those who want release from their present circumstances.

We pray for those in need of hope this day

Amen

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.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen

Hymn 306 STF Now the green blade rises [Bing Videos](#)

Blessing

Christ's peace be with you in all that you are

Christ's peace be with you in all that you do

Christ's peace be with you in all that you will be

This day and for evermore