

Worship at Home – 4th May 2025 (3rd Sunday of Easter)

A short act of worship for use in people's homes prepared by Claire Simpson.

Introduction

This act of worship has been prepared by Revd Claire Simpson. I work in the Basingstoke area of the Berkshire and Hampshire Borders Circuit, and it is good to be worshipping with you this week.

Happy Easter! In our worship this week we shall hear about two people, Simon Peter and Saul (later called Paul), who were radically changed by encountering Jesus. This prompts us to ask, 'how might our lives be changed by meeting the risen Christ this Easter?'

Call to worship

Christ has risen! Alleluia!
He has restored us to life
and turned our mourning into dancing.
So let us come,
sing praises to the Lord
and give thanks to his holy name.

Hymn – STF 314 – This joyful Eastertide Fred Pratt Green (1903–2000)

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|---|---|
| 1 This joyful Eastertide,
What need is there for grieving?
Cast all your cares aside
And be not unbelieving:
<i>Come, share our Easter joy</i>
<i>That death could not imprison,</i>
<i>Nor any power destroy</i>
<i>Our Christ, who is arisen!</i> | 2 No work for him is vain,
No faith in him mistaken,
For Easter makes it plain
His Kingdom is not shaken:
<i>Chorus</i> |
| | 3 Then put your trust in Christ,
In waking and in sleeping,
His grace on earth sufficed;
He'll never quit his keeping:
<i>Chorus</i> |

Opening prayers

Lord, you are indeed the God of miracles, the God of the impossible.
You raised Jesus from the grave. Alleluia!
You reveal yourself in so many different and amazing ways in your world today.
You can be there in a blinding flash from heaven,
but also, in the gradual breaking of dawn
when our souls are in darkness.
We come before you now,
rejoicing in your power to light up our lives,
and to change our perspective.
We are waiting, Lord. **Amen**

Lord God, we ask your forgiveness for the times
when we have hurt or denied you
by hurting or denying one of your children.
We pray that whether you come to us
in a loud, clear voice, or as a tiny whisper,
we will hear and gladly obey.
Bless us with your forgiveness and love.

Assurance of forgiveness

You alone, mighty Lord, have the power to forgive
and to help us see the error of our ways.
Thank you for the new perspective we have
when we realise that we are truly forgiven. **Amen**

Bible reading – Acts 9:1-20

Saul Becomes a Believer

⁹ Meanwhile, Saul continued to oppose the Lord's followers. He said they would be put to death. He went to the high priest. ² He asked the priest for letters to the synagogues in Damascus. He wanted to find men and women who belonged to the Way of Jesus. The letters would allow him to take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³ On his journey, Saul approached Damascus. Suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground. He heard a voice speak to him, "Saul! Saul! Why are you opposing me?"

⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus," he replied. "I am the one you are opposing. ⁶ Now get up and go into the city. There you will be told what you must do."

⁷ The men traveling with Saul stood there. They weren't able to speak. They had heard the sound. But they didn't see anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground. He opened his eyes, but he couldn't see. So, they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was blind. He didn't eat or drink anything.

¹⁰ In Damascus there was a believer named Ananias. The Lord called out to him in a vision. "Ananias!" he said.

"Yes, Lord," he answered.

¹¹ The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street. Ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying. ¹² In a vision Saul has seen a man come and place his hands on him. That man's name is Ananias. In the vision, Ananias placed his hands on Saul so he could see again."

¹³ "Lord," Ananias answered, "I've heard many reports about this man. They say he has done great harm to your holy people in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ Now he has come here to arrest all those who worship you. The chief priests have given him authority to do this."

¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! I have chosen this man to work for me. He will announce my name to the Gentiles and to their kings. He will also announce my name to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for me."

¹⁷ Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. He placed his hands on Saul. "Brother Saul," he said, "you saw the Lord Jesus. He appeared to you on the road as you were coming here. He has sent me so that you will be able to see again. You will be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸ Right away something like scales fell from Saul's eyes. And he could see again. He got up and was baptized. ¹⁹ After eating some food, he got his strength back.

Saul in Damascus and Jerusalem

Saul spent several days with the believers in Damascus. ²⁰ Right away he began to preach in the synagogues. He taught that Jesus is the Son of God.

Hymn – STF 440 – Amazing grace John Newton (1725-1807)

- 1 Amazing grace - how sweet the sound -
 that saved a wretch like me!
 I once was lost, but now am found,
 was blind, but now I see.
- 2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
 and grace my fears relieved;
 how precious did that grace appear
 the hour I first believed!
- 3 Through many dangers, toils and snares
 I have already come;
 'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
 and grace will lead me home.
- 4 The Lord has promised good to me,
 his word my hope secures;
 he will my shield and portion be
 as long as life endures.
- 5 And, when this heart and flesh shall fail
 and mortal life shall cease,
 I shall possess within the veil
 a life of joy and peace.
- 6 The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
 The sun forbear to shine;
 But God, who call'd me here below,
 will be forever mine.

Bible reading – John 21:1-19

Jesus and the Miracle of Many Fish

21 After this, Jesus appeared to his disciples again. It was by the Sea of Galilee. Here is what happened. ² Simon Peter and Thomas, who was also called Didymus, were there together. Nathanael from Cana in Galilee and the sons of Zebedee were with them. So were two other disciples. ³ "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them. They said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat. That night they didn't catch anything.

⁴ Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore. But the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

⁵ He called out to them, "Friends, don't you have any fish?"

"No," they answered.

⁶ He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat. There you will find some fish." When they did, they could not pull the net into the boat. There were too many fish in it.

⁷ Then the disciple Jesus loved said to Simon Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Peter heard that, he put his coat on. He had taken it off earlier. Then he jumped into the water. ⁸ The other disciples followed in the boat. They were towing the net full of fish. The shore was only about 100 yards away. ⁹ When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals. There were fish on it. There was also some bread.

¹⁰ Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." ¹¹ So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat. He dragged the net to shore. It was full of large fish. There were 153 of them. But even with that many fish the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them. He did the same thing with the fish. ¹⁴ This was the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Jesus Gives Peter His Task

¹⁵ When Jesus and the disciples had finished eating, Jesus spoke to Simon Peter. He asked, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these others do?"

"Yes, Lord," he answered. "You know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

¹⁶ Again Jesus asked, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord. You know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

¹⁷ Jesus spoke to him a third time. He asked, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

Peter felt bad because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He answered, "Lord, you know all things. You know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ What I'm about to tell you is true. When you were younger, you dressed yourself. You went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands. Someone else will dress you. Someone else will lead you where you do not want to go." ¹⁹ Jesus said this to point out how Peter would die. His death would bring glory to God. Then Jesus said to him, "Follow me!"

Reflection on the reading

I wonder if you can think of actors who become so well known for playing one particular role on television or in films? Maybe some of those who have been James Bond or Dr Who? From film I can think of Daniel Radcliffe as Harry Potter, and from television Brenda Blethyn as the detective Vera Stanhope. Who can you call to mind? The difficulty with actors like these is that it is hard to see them playing anything else because they are forever associated with one character. Perhaps it is the same for when we won't let people forget a mistake or an incident in their lives, we let that 'thing' forever define and influence our picture of them.

In our Bible readings today, Peter and Saul (later to become Paul) are both greatly changed by encountering Jesus. Their lives begin another chapter that is radically different from what it was before. Saul was well known for hating and persecuting Christians, followers of Jesus belonging to 'the Way', until his Damascus Road experience. He is literally blinded by the light and when he regains his sight he sees things from a changed perspective. God has chosen him to be a light to the Gentiles and to open their eyes to Jesus. Peter might have been stuck with the label of

‘denying Peter’ (like ‘doubting Thomas’) but in conversation at breakfast on the seashore the risen Jesus forgives, restores their relationship, and commissions Peter for a new ministry.

God enables Peter and Saul to leave behind their past and move into a future trusting in Jesus to lead and guide them. During this Easter season, and especially through our readings today, we are invited to ponder on how encountering Jesus might change us and how we live. Can we see and feel that difference that Jesus makes to our lives? Can others see a difference in us? How might our perspective be changed as we grow in our relationship with God? How might this shape us and what God is calling us to offer as God’s people? These are challenging questions! Peter and Saul responded positively to God’s call. They both experience forgiveness and love that beckons them forward into faith and God was able to use both of them mightily for God’s plans and purposes.

How might God use us? Today.....into this coming week.....and beyond?

Prayers for the world, others and ourselves

In this week of local elections,
we pray for those standing as candidates and for those who will vote.
May truth be tended and integrity fed
and the way of Christ be followed.

We pray for the Catholic church throughout the world after the funeral of Pope Francis and in these days of mourning.
We pray for those with the responsibility of choosing the next Pope.
May truth be tended and integrity fed
and the way of Christ be followed.

We pray for nations commemorating the 80th Anniversary of VE day in this coming week.
As we reflect on the past, help us always to defend what is good and to pursue peace in our world today.
May truth be tended and integrity fed
and the way of Christ be followed.

We pray for those entrusted with the administration of justice
and implementation of policies that affect the lives of millions,
that your wisdom and understanding would be with those who hold positions of power and responsibility.
May truth be tended and integrity fed
and the way of Christ be followed.

We continue to pray for the people of Russia and Ukraine.
For those traumatised by all they have seen, heard and endured.
May they encounter your risen presence in the ruins of their lives
and in the rubble of their cities.
May truth be tended and integrity fed
and the way of Christ be followed.

We pray for people who feel forgotten as the attention of the world’s media moves elsewhere:
for all places affected by war or hunger.
May truth be tended and integrity fed
and the way of Christ be followed.

We pray for those who we know and love,
for those we live alongside, for those on our hearts,
and for those we know are suffering.

Lord Jesus, may we catch on to your teaching, follow your way
and seek to be your risen hopeful presence in the world today. **Amen**

You may now wish to say The Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Hymn – STF 297 – Christ is alive! Brian Wren (born 1936)

- 1 Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.
The cross stands empty to the sky.
Let streets and homes with praises ring.
Love, drowned in death, shall never die.
- 2 Christ is alive! No longer bound
to distant years in Palestine,
but saving, healing, here and now,
and touching every place and time.
- 3 In every insult, rift and war,
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,
and lives, where even hope has died.
- 4 Women and men, in age and youth,
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,
and find the way, the life, the truth,
revealed in Jesus, freed for all.
- 5 Christ is alive, and comes to bring
good news to this and every age,
till earth and sky and ocean ring
with joy, with justice, love and praise.

Closing Words

We move from this time of worship prepared to change, knowing that God is with us.
May we have eyes opened to see God at work in us and others,
may we have words of love to offer other people,
may we trust and obey God's call on our lives.

Blessing

And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us this day and with all those
who we love, and those we are called to love, now and forevermore. **Amen**

Bible readings from [New International Reader's Version \(NIRV\)](#)

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