

PRAYER AND REFLECTION

The Revd Heather McIntyre
Friday 24th April 2020



Opening Psalm 19:1-3

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.

There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

Prayer:

God our Father, we come to you this day in worship and praise and in gratitude for all that you have done for us, for the beauty of your creation all around us and for all that is good in our lives.

We thank you that you are our carer, protector, provider, our rock to stand on during storms, our fortress to hide in for safety during troubles.

Open our eyes and ears today as we read your word.
Reveal your love to us again, because we need reminding
of your grace. Help us today to see you, to hear you and
to praise you as we ought. Amen

Reading: Luke 24:15-21a

While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognising him. And he said to them, “What were you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel...”

Reflection:

This extract is from the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus that first Easter Sunday. It is perhaps one of my favourite stories in the Bible.

The disciples seem glad of some company on the road and so they walk with this stranger, as they tell him everything that has been going on in Jerusalem. They tell

him how things had looked so promising at first, when Jesus impressed everyone with his words and mighty acts, and then how things had gone wrong, badly wrong, so that there was nothing left for them to do but go back home, dragging their feet in the dust.

“We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel”, they say to him, admitting defeat. “We had hoped”. Hope in the past tense – that’s one of the saddest sounds a human being can make. And in response Jesus opens the scriptures to them and reveals who he is in the breaking of bread. He has been with them all along that road.

During difficult times such as these I sometimes find myself on my own road to Emmaus. At times I struggle to put aside my own hopes for these months... I had hoped to be with my family over Easter, I had hoped to celebrate my grandson’s first birthday with him, I had hoped to spend more time with friends now I’m retired...Albeit in very small ways, my hopes have been dashed and I’m sure some of yours have been too.

I then remember that across our nation and our world many, many people’s hopes are being broken, as loved ones suffer and die, as livelihoods are taken away, as future plans have to be laid aside.

Whilst these hopes take on the past tense, I hold onto my hope and belief that God can meet us in our brokenness and bless us with his presence, just as he did with Cleopas and his friend. After my husband died very

suddenly and many of my hopes for our future together had been lost, someone shared the words of a hymn by John Bell with me and I share it as a prayer for us all today.

*We cannot measure how You heal
Or answer every sufferer's prayer,
Yet we believe Your grace responds
Where faith and doubt unite to care.
Your hands though bloodied on the cross,
Survive to hold and heal and warn,
To carry all through death to life
And cradle children yet unborn.*

*The pain that will not go away,
The guilt that clings from things long past,
The fear of what the future holds
Are present as if meant to last.
But present too is love, which tends
The hurt we never hoped to find,
The private agonies inside,
The memories that haunt the mind.*

*So some have come who need Your help
And some have come to make amends,
As hands, which shaped and saved the world,
Are present in the touch of friends.
Lord, let Your Spirit meet us here,
To mend the body, mind and soul,
To disentangle peace from pain
And make Your broken people whole.*

Amen

Blessing

May God bless you. May God keep you ever with great care and lead your lives with love. May Christ's warm welcome shine in your lives, and peace in heart and home prevail through every day.

Amen