**Thatcham URC – Worshipping Together (Gathered and Separate)**

**A Short Reflective Service with Communion**

**Sunday – 1st May 2022, 10.30am.**

**Welcome and Introduction**

Welcome to our Reflective Service today, here at church, online or read at home. It’s good to be together again and we also celebrate Communion together. Today is the third Sunday of Easter. We are following the Lectionary for today and continuing from last week with Michael Penny, we are looking at another of the miracles of Jesus’ appearances following his resurrection. So, as we are gathered let us worship God.

**Today**, in our **Call to Worship**, the psalmist encourages his people to praise God because of his lasting favour as he answers the prayer of his faithful people. **In our Reflection**, after a night of fishing and empty nets, the disciples meet the risen Jesus on the seashore and eat breakfast with him. They don’t recognise him and it’s only after the miraculous haul of fish that they catch on. This encounter leads to a moment of healing and transformation, and a new start for Peter, who before the crucifixion had denied even knowing Jesus.

**Call to Worship: From Psalm 30. Sorrow into Joy**

*I will exalt you, Lord, for you lifted me out of the depths… O Lord my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me. Sing the praises of the Lord, you his faithful people; praise his holy name. For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favour lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. You clothed me with joy, O Lord my God, I will praise you for ever.* ***Thanks be to God.***

Remembering how God has helped us, especially in answering our prayer in difficult times, and then thanking him, is a great way to deepen our relationship with God and so find strength to face the future. In David’s prayer he shares with the people, and with us, his experience of God’s goodness. He encourages us to sing praise to God because he is a gracious God. Even the darkest human experiences have a joyful end, ‘with rejoicing in the morning,’ for his faithful people. The changes God made in David’s life made him want to praise God forever.

**Prayer of Thanks and Praise, and The Lord’s Prayer**

Our Almighty God and heavenly Father, it is right to remember to thank you that we can gather together like this in your house. We thank and praise you, that when the nets of our lives are empty, you fill them with the abundance of your love; when we are afraid and fall down, you hold out your hand of forgiveness; and when we are tempted to give up, you call us afresh and give us strength for our journey. Thank you for this transformation of our lives and our equipping to love and serve. **Amen**

**Almighty God**, forgive us for the times when life worsens or overwhelms us and we doubt you and your ability to help us, and lose hope. Despite your promises to us, we are sorry for those times when we go our own way and trust more in ourselves and place our hope elsewhere. Help us to see the way you have prepared for us, and increase our faith to place our hope and trust in you. **Amen**

**Our Father,** who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name; thy Kingdom come, thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Hymn MP 74: Christ is risen! Hallelujah!**

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| 1. Christ is risen! Hallelujah!Risen our victorious Head;Sing His praises; Hallelujah!Christ is risen from the dead.Gratefully our hearts adore Him,As His light once more appears;Bowing down in joy before Him,Rising up from griefs and tears.*Christ is risen: Hallelujah!Risen our victorious Head;Sing His praises; Hallelujah!Christ is risen from the dead.* | 2. Christ is risen! all the sadnessOf His earthly life is o’er;Through the open gates of gladnessHe returns to life once more;Death and hell before Him bending,He doth rise the Victor now,Angels on His steps attending,Glory round His wounded brow.3. Christ is risen! Henceforth neverDeath nor hell shall us enthral;We are Christ’s, in Him foreverWe have triumphed over all;All the doubting and dejectionOf our trembling hearts have ceased,’Tis His day of resurrection;Let us rise and keep the feast.*John S B Monsell (1811-75)* |

**Dedication of our Offerings**

**Almighty God**, as part of our worship today, we give thanks to you for all your gifts to us and your provision for us. And so, in our thanksgiving to you, we offer our gifts to you. Please accept our offering, given by various means and at different times. We pray they may be used wisely and well for the sake of your kingdom here, through the work of your church, to be a blessing to others. **Amen**

**Bible Reading:** **John 21:1-17 Jesus appearance and the miraculous catch of fish**

**1** Afterwards Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: **2**Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. **3**‘I’m going out to fish,’ Simon Peter told them, and they said, ‘We’ll go with you.’ So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

**4**Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus. **5**He called out to them, ‘Friends, haven’t you any fish?’ ‘No,’ they answered.

**6**He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

**7**Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment round him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. **8**The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred metres. **9**When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and 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 and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. **12**Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. **13**Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. **14**This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

**15**When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

**16**Again Jesus said, “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**The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.” ***Thanks be to God for his word.***

**Reflection:** **Even more unimaginably – Jesus appears!**

This final chapter of John’s Gospel reminds us, among the miracles, of the effective pastoral work of Jesus. In the gospel we are made aware of his approachability, sensitivity and his perfect knowledge and insight into the character of people. He is, after all, the one through whom all things were made (1:3). In this chapter Jesus appears for the third time to his disciples following his resurrection, It was the seventh appearance in total so far, and there were four more to come before his ascension. But on this day it was in their world — the world of the fishermen. And the disciples were out fishing on the Sea of Galilee.

They had caught nothing all night. Jesus redirects their netting and the result is a huge catch. John reports with eyewitness vividness that it was 153 large fish. Elsewhere in the gospels the net breaks. Here it is full, but remains intact. First the beloved disciple and then the others recognise that the familiar Jesus, the crucified Jesus, is the stranger on the shore inviting them to breakfast. Jesus has promised to make the disciples ‘fishers of men’, that is, all people in all their diiversity. What an encouragement to know that Jesus will direct their mission, and its fruitfulness will depend on the risen and soon to be ascended Saviour, who is himself the director of the Church’s life he is about to build.

Jesus, the sensitive pastor, now restores the thrice-denying Peter with the threefold repetition, “Do you love me?” The last time Peter was at a charcoal fire, he denied knowing Jesus; now he affirms his love for Jesus. Peter’s sin and failure, which caused him such anguish, had to be faced and dealt with even if the dealing with it hurt. But with God, failure is never final, nothing is wasted. And here is the condition of fruitful service: dealing with the sin and failure in order to make us whole again.

And this is an important lesson. I once played for a Sunday league football club in my teens and was quite promising, like Peter amongst the disciples. But then I was injured and I hoped I could play on. The coach said no. You will let yourself, the team and the club down. You need to get fit again to be useful. We have to get rid of those things in our lives that will hinder us from loving and serving God and others usefully and effectively. Failure doesn’t have to be final with God and we can seek God’s forgiveness and help. And he can deal with us and equip us effectively for everything he wants us to do.

For Peter the outflow of such love for Christ is seen in his future care for the sheep. Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and Peter calls him the Chief Shepherd, and sees his own role as being a shepherd of God’s flock. Peter’s life would now be a life of shepherding God’s flock, feeding his sheep and building the Church. As I said on Easter Sunday; within weeks, Peter was at the centre of the proclamation of the Gospel to the world as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Such was Peter’s transformation by the resurrection, that took place within him, and continued with him right up to his martyrdom 30 years later.

As I concluded on Easter Sunday, the empty tomb was not “good news” immediately. To become the good news, along with the tomb’s emptiness there also had to be encounter with its former occupant. The disciples’ imaginations needed to be burst open by resurrection, and that was about to come. On the first day all this was quite unimaginable. But Jesus didn’t leave it there. Even more unimaginably, he starts to appear.

Jesus met Peter on the beach and changed his life for ever, taking the brokenness of Peter’s denial and turning it into a restatement of belief: ‘Yes Lord; you know that I love you.’ In spite of all the mistakes, denials and failures, Peter’s declarations of faith become the rock upon which the church is built – a place where failures find forgiveness and mistakes can be mended, and even become a means to grace, if we ask God to work on them with us. **Amen**

**Hymn MP 52: God sent His son**

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| 1. God sent His son, they called Him JesusHe came to love, heal and forgiveHe lived and died to buy my pardonAn empty grave is there to prove my saviour lives*Because He lives, I can face tomorrowBecause He lives, all fear is goneBecause I know He holds the futureAnd life is worth the living, just because He lives* | 2. How sweet to hold a new-born babyAnd feel the pride and joy He givesBut greater still the calm assuranceThis child can face uncertain days because He lives3. And then one day, I'll cross the riverI'll fight life's final war with painAnd then, as death gives way to victoryI'll see the lights of glory and I'll know He reigns.*Gloria and William J Gaither © Capitol Christian Music Group CCL No 2249* |

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***We come now to celebrate the Sacrament of Communion***

**A Simple Communion**

We are still scattered a little, but we are brought together as we remember. Let these symbols of bread and wine help to make Jesus real to us in his body and blood. A body that was broken for us and blood that was shed for us. In this sacrament, we are made one with him — delivered from the power of death into his Kingdom of life and love.

**Almighty God**, we remember that Jesus was born of Mary; he lived our common life on earth; he revealed your love as a Father; he showed us the way to live; he suffered and died for us; on the third day you raised him from the dead; and he is present with us now through the Holy Spirit. In his presence, and in the company of all your people, we celebrate the Lord’s Supper. **Amen**

**On the night before the crucifixion**, when evening came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, ‘I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover meal with you before I suffer.

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, *‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’*

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, *‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you, for the forgiveness of sins.’* When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives to Gethsemane.

**Hymn: R&S 448. Here, Lord, we take the broken bread**

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| Here, Lord, we take the broken breadAnd drink the wine, believingThat by your life our souls are fed,Your parting gifts receiving. | As you have given, so we would giveOurselves for others’ healing:As you have lived, so we would live,The Father’s love revealing.*C V Pilcher (1879-1961)* |

**Prayer of Thanksgiving and Sharing – The Bread**

We give thanks to you, O God, that from the earth you cause the grain to come for the making of bread. We praise you for Jesus, the bread of life, whose body was given for us.

By your Holy Spirit sanctify us and **this bread**, that the bread which we break may be to us the communion of the body of Christ, and that we may be made one in him. As of old you fed your people in the wilderness, so feed us now that we may live to your praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

When Jesus had given thanks, he broke the bread and said:

***‘Take, and eat: this is my body given for you. Do this, in remembrance of me.’***

***The Body of Christ broken for us.*** *(let us take the bread and eat)*

**Prayer of Thanksgiving and Sharing – The Wine**

We give thanks to you, O God, that you cause the vine to yield fruit. We bless you for Jesus, the true vine, whose blood was poured out for us.

By your Holy Spirit sanctify us and **this wine**, that the cup which we bless may be to us the communion of the blood of Christ, and that through abiding in him we may bear fruit that lasts. As we share the sufferings of Christ, so give us grace that we may know the power of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

When Jesus had given thanks, he gave the cup to his disciples and said:

***‘Drink this, all of you; for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, in remembrance of me.’***

***The Blood of Christ shed for us.*** *(let us take the wine and drink)*

Thanks be to God for these gifts beyond words, the bread of life, the cup of salvation,

this lasting memorial. **Amen**

**Gracious God**, we praise you for what you have given and for what you have promised us here. You have made us one with all your people in heaven and on earth. You have fed us with the bread of life, and renewed us for your service. Now we give ourselves to you; and we ask that our daily living may be part of the life of your kingdom, and that our love may be your love reaching out into the life of the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

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**Prayers of Intercession**

**Lord Jesus**, when you met Peter on the beach that morning, you did not reject him, you reached out to him in grace. You did not remind him of his failure and you gently led him, the lost sheep, back into the fold of your love. We thank you that you recommissioned him as a shepherd of the Chief Shepherd. We are grateful that we can experience your renewing mercy at any moment of our lives. We thank you that your presence makes all things possible. We offer you thanks and praise for the grace that transforms our lives. **Amen**

**Sovereign God**, we pray for the Church and all Christians; for those who live in the dark and fearful places in the world, for those crushed with violence because of their faith; for those facing pain and the evil intentions of others; for those who have never experienced the joy and the freedom and the power that raised Christ from the dead, and for whom faith means hanging on by the skin of their teeth.

May the risen Christ open their hearts and transform their lives. Lord, in your mercy - hear our prayer. **Amen**

**Heavenly Father**, we pray for those who are hungry; for those who are hungry for bread; for those who are starving for food. We pray for those in refugee camps with no control or no power; for those who are hungry because of where they live, the conditions they face and who are unable to grow their own food. We pray for those who are hungry because of drought, human foolishness, or human greed.

May the truth of Christ transform our world. Lord, in your mercy - hear our prayer. **Amen**

**Loving God**, we pray for those whose journey through life is filled with pain; for those who are ill and whose illness dominates the whole of their thinking and every part of their lives; for those who may never recover and those who care for them; and those who work or serve in a hospice, a home for the elderly or a nursing home.

May Christ join them on their journey and may they find new hope in him. Lord, In your mercy – hear our prayer. **Amen**

**Mighty God**, we continue to pray for the people of Ukraine. For those hiding in basements, for those living in trenches, for those traumatised by all they have seen and endured through abuse, imprisonment and torture. We pray for those who have lost loved ones through the shelling, through the defense of their country and for all those now living as refugees.

We also pray for people who feel forgotten as the attention of the world’s media moves elsewhere: in Afghanistan, in Syria, in The Yemen, and all places of war and hunger.

May they all encounter the risen presence of Christ in the ruins of their lives and in the rubble of their cities. Lord, In your mercy – hear our prayer. **Amen**

**Hymn R&S 262: Crown him with many crowns**

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| 1. Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne, Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own. Awake, my soul, and sing of him who died for thee, and hail him as thy matchless King through all eternity.2. Crown him the Son of God,before the worlds began:and ye, who tread where he hath trod,crown him the Son of Man;who every grief hath knownthat wrings the human breast,and takes and bears them for his own,that all in him may rest. | 3. Crown him the Lord of life, who triumphed o'er the grave, and rose victorious in the strife for those he came to save. His glories now we sing, who died, and rose on high, who died, eternal life to bring, and lives that death may die.4. Crown him, the Lord of love; behold his hands and side, rich wounds, yet visible above, in beauty glorified. All hail, Redeemer, hail! For thou hast died for me; thy praise and glory shall not fail throughout eternity.*Matthew Bridges (1800–94) Godfrey Thring (1823-1903)* |

**Thank you** for joining us today, here at church, online or reading at home. It has been good to worship together and celebrate again the resurrection of Jesus Christ that changed everything. We have hope and because he lives, we can face tomorrow and live is worth the living.

**Closing Prayer and Blessing**

**Lord Jesus**, as you walked on the shore at Galilee to meet your disciples, meet with us we pray,

to bring confidence where there is fear, and purpose where there is worry, and may each of us experience your work of transformation in our lives, and that second chance, in the days ahead. **Amen**

**And so, to you, our dear Church Family and Friends**

The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; The Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace. **Amen**

