



18th April | 3rd Sunday of Easter

Commissioned with the Mission of Jesus.

Greetings all, as we enter into the 3rd week of Easter, it is so wonderful to be delivering the message today, remembering with joy, Christ's victory over death, our sins are forgiven and the assurance that God gives us a future, or we could say in the words of a favourite hymn of mine, that has helped me and many others on our journey with Christ, "this is a day of new beginnings!

So let us pray. Heavenly Father, as we reflect on our Bible passages today, may the words I speak today, challenge us in our daily lives and encourage and help us to grow in wisdom, love and service as your servants in this community. Amen

Our first reading from Luke's Acts of the Apostles, shows Peter in action, carrying out the Christ's command in word and deed by preaching the forgiveness of sins.

Our 2nd reading today, from 1 John, remembers the weaknesses of us all, but reminds us that we are blessed with the intercession of Jesus before his Father.

And lastly, today's Gospel is Luke's account of the final appearance of Jesus to his disciples, when He gave them their mission to preach the Gospel, the good news, throughout the world.

In our first reading from Acts, when Peter carries out Christ's command, we find in the accounts of Acts not just word of mouth proclamation, but the witness to Jesus in deeds of healing. Peter heals the cripple who sat before the "Beautiful Gate" of the Temple, and he does it "in the name of Jesus of Nazareth".

His address to the gathered crowd, then explains the sign he has just performed.

It is faith in Jesus that causes the man to be healed.

Already in his address, the divine names of the Old Testament start being applied to Jesus: The Holy One, the Just One, The Prince of Life. The name 'Servant' is also given to the Lord.

What Luke is stressing in this account, is that the missionary proclamation gives no more excuses for ignorance about what is happening.

God's plan took consideration of ignorance when Jesus was condemned, but now the issue is clear.

Once the resurrection has been achieved, excuses must cease!

People who now refuse to be convinced are numbered with the leaders who put the Lord to death. For those who repent and believe, God will look at their sins no longer. What a powerful message to hold on to!

In our 2nd Reading the letter to the church from St John, John talks about the *word of life, Jesus* & and to live our lives in belief in God's Son, and to show this in love.

Living in faith is living in the light, so what does this mean to us?

We can tell that we live in the light when:

- no sin grips us or holds us captive,
- when God's commandments of faith, love and submission are in us,

- when we do not give in to the false standards of this world.

It is often commented that St John walks on the mountain peaks. John doesn't compromise the real meaning of redemption. He means us to live the same kind of life as Christ lives, sinless and utterly committed to God.

But when we read deeper into John's words, we see John take a realistic approach into his vision.

- We can and we do sin,
- we fall short of the mark!
- We tone down the brightness of Christ's light in ourselves.

But Jesus, in his love, heals this by his intercession with his Father. What great assuredness and hope that continues to give us!

Now to our Gospel passage from the Gospel of Luke. Last week, we heard John's account of our Lord's missionary commission to the disciples: this Sunday we hear Luke's account.

Have you ever, like me, thought it is strange that it should be the final appearance of Jesus that dispels the doubts of his apostles?

Well there is a purpose in this. They are the witnesses of his resurrection in *order that* they might go out to preach his message.

Luke says until this mission is given, they are not really witnesses to the resurrection event.

Jesus does not show himself to *prove* his resurrection, but to stir up their conviction and belief.

Luke then explains the origin of apostolic witness as the vision of the risen Christ.

But this is not all.

Jesus opens up the meaning of the scriptures for his chosen witnesses to interpret.

The scriptures point to him and explain what he has done!

In his name, not the Old Testament divine name, they preach the forgiveness of sins, which is none other than the restoration of God's favour.

So let us summarise what St Luke is saying to us in this passage, that:

- The mastery over sin that Christ's death brings is, in the mind of St Luke, the message people want to hear.
- A victory of the magnitude of the resurrection is needed to root out the evils from our heart!
- In the Christian, the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, should banish the fears brought by evil, and create a Christian optimism!
- But the foundations will have to shake, so long as the mission of Christ is to continue!

As with all things, as one journey ends, another begins.

Jesus has come to the end of the work that the Father gave him, now the disciples are about to begin theirs. Jesus returns to the Father to send the spirit upon his disciples, now gathered in Jerusalem.

As Jesus journeyed towards Jerusalem, and from there back to his Father, so the disciples must journey from Jerusalem to all nations, witnessing what they have seen and heard, preaching the good news of repentance and the forgiveness of sins.

So began the journey of the church, and all of us belong to that journey, as companions! We all have experienced the Easter mysteries!

Now we are to proclaim all, by word and actions what it means.

As the earliest Church reached out from Jerusalem into the pagan world, we, modern Christians face an equal challenge to this mission.

Let us all look forward with a true heart to the challenges and opportunities that present themselves in 2021, and continue to live as resurrection people bringing Christ's love, peace, joy & hope to our communities and families, to our environments!