



Call to Worship - 1 John 3:1

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

Hymn 16 – We give immortal praise

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H6ZNNGjZbDk>

We give immortal praise
To God the Father's love,
For all our comforts here,
And better hopes above.
He sent his own eternal Son
To die for sins that man had done.

To God the Spirit's name
Immortal worship give,
Whose new-creating power
Makes the dead sinner live:
His work completes the great design,
And fills the soul with joy divine.

To God the Son belongs
Immortal glory too,
Who bought us with his blood
From everlasting woe:
And now he lives, and now he reigns,
And sees the fruit of all his pains.

Almighty God, to thee
Be endless honours done,
The undivided three,
And the mysterious one:
Where reason fails with all her powers,
There faith prevails, and love adores.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

Prayer

We come in worship, great God and father, Still warm from the glow of Easter, Still remembering all we heard that day, And yet confused too. You reached out, they touched, You ate fish, they understood; You come among us, we fear; You speak and we believe. We know what we have been told, We have recited creeds and statements of faith, But nothing compares with knowing You beside us, really, now. Thank you, Lord and Saviour, For your great gift to us, of forgiveness, Yes, forgiveness, but reassuring presence too, You, saying we are forgiven.

God, we come in repentance, We come in faith and in hope, We come in worship and wait, Wait for you beside us, now. *William Glasse*

Lord's Prayer Our Father ...

Introduction to theme - Filling the gaps

However hard we may try, we cannot understand how the disciples must have felt in those early days after the resurrection. The emotional swings between grief and jubilation together with the realisation that what they thought they understood was partial.

Then a miracle happened, Jesus appeared again and helped them understand the scriptures.

I wonder if that filled all the gaps for them?

Hymn 30 - Jesus stand among us

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mC16hj3RoXo>

Jesus, stand among us
At the meeting of our lives;
Be our sweet agreement
At the meeting of our eyes.
O Jesus, we love You, so we gather here;
Join our hearts in unity and take away our fear.

O Jesus, we love You, so we gather here;
Join our hearts in unity and take away our fear.

So to You we're gathering
Out of each and every land;
Christ the love between us
At the joining of our hands.

Jesus, stand among us
At the breaking of the bread;
Join us as one body
As we worship You, our Head.
O Jesus, we love You, so we gather here;
Join our hearts in unity and take away our fear.

Graham Kendrick (born 1950)

Reading - Luke 24:36b-48

Jesus appears to the disciples

Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.' When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, 'Do you have anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence. He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.' Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, 'This is what is written: the Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

Hymn 493 - Come, Lord, to our souls come down Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9f3Bnl9ICro>

Come, Lord, to our souls come down,
Through the gospel speaking;
Let your words, your cross and crown,
Lighten all our seeking.

Drive out darkness from the heart,
Banish pride and blindness;
Plant in every inward part

Truthfulness and kindness.

Eyes, be open, spirits stirred,
Minds new truth receiving,
Stir us, Lord, by your own words,
Deepen our believing.

Howard CA Gaunt (1902-1983)

Sermon - Understanding (Luke 24:45)

The Message:

He went on to open their understanding of the Word of God, showing them how to read their Bibles this way. He said, "You can see now how it is written that the Messiah suffers, rises from the dead on the third day, and then a total life-change through the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed in his name to all nations—starting from here, from Jerusalem! You're the first to hear and see it. You're the witnesses. What comes next is very important: I am sending what my Father promised to you, so stay here in the city until he arrives, until you're equipped with power from on high."

Introduction

When we have gaps in our knowledge, for many of us it is in our inquisitive nature to want to fill those gaps. If we are struggling we may make assumptions, develop hypotheses to fill the gaps or simply make things up.

Sometimes when we look back later, with hindsight, and realise we were well wide of the mark, while at other times our intuition was very close.

It is interesting that Jesus had to 'open their minds' to understand the Scripture. That implies that they were closed to what was really happening.

We may well believe that we have open minds, but do we really? Especially when it comes to believing miracles in faith?

What is happening really is that the Old Testament is dropping into place.

We can look at this as three Rs.

- Resurrection
- Redemption
- Restoration

Resurrection

Jesus had been talking about his death before it happened. He had spoke of rising again but it seems there was limited expectation that it was a real promise.

In the room, three things about the mechanical process of resurrection stand out.

- i) They were behind locked doors so Jesus's bodily form must have been different; how else did he gain entry.
- ii) They saw his hands and feet, both had been nailed to the cross. It was the same body that had died which now stood before them.
- iii) They watched as he ate broiled fish; his body was sufficiently physical as to be able to consume food.

There is no easy way to brush aside this combination of three pointers to a mechanical process.

Redemption

The Call to Worship from 1 John 3 includes, in verse 1, the statement 'we are children of God'.

Entrance into the family of the children of God has a very high bar in terms of required qualifications. Those who would be part of it must be sinless or to have paid a massive fine for sins to get rid of them.

The second point that was slowly being realised, and still is hard to grasp, is in two parts:

- a) The Old Testament tells us by deduction that we are all highly sinful and sacrifices as prescribed seemed not to wash away sins as hoped.
- b) The only sacrifice that would work would cost more than money, it would cost a human life; and God gave Jesus to be that sacrificial life.

That life, the life of Jesus Christ is the fine needed to discharge the sentences passed against us all and clear the obstacles from the path in to full membership of the family of the Children of God.

There are many poetic references in our hymns and songs to the effect of the blood of Jesus in washing away our Sin.

Restoration

I well remember from my school days that sometimes when punishment was required, after it had been discharged the after-effects lingered on. Everyone knew about the misdeed, reminders of which would be meted out for a disproportionate period afterwards.

In past times, a freed prisoner may just as well have been in prison for all the chances there were of reintegration into the world.

Fortunately we have a more progressive view of disciplining children now than I experienced. We are better too at preparing reformed prisoners for life and after prison the aim should be the hope of living without stigma.

That is the best way I can illustrate the effects of the complete nature of our redemption through the resurrection – if is a story of complete restoration – wounds left for all to see but complete healing.

Summary

At the cross Jesus brought the Old Testament to its conclusion. Everything foretold about a Messiah had been delivered in the shedding of the blood of Jesus. It's unfortunate that we misunderstand what is very basic.

We Sin and deserve death. Jesus died and we live, We more than live; we thrive in God's family. We praise him for that remarkable gift. Amen.

Hymn - 424 - God forgave my sin Watch on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CGKhz1_C41s

God forgave my sin in Jesus' name;
I've been born again in Jesus' name,
and in Jesus' name I come to you
to share His love as He told me to.

*He said: 'Freely, freely you have received,
freely, freely give;
go in My name and because you believe,
others will know that I live.'*

All power is given in Jesus' name

in earth and heaven in Jesus' name;
and in Jesus' name I come to you
to share His power as He told me to.

Chorus

Carol Owens (born 1931)

Prayers of Intercession

On Day 14 the Methodist Prayer Handbook, 'Hidden Treasures' invites the wider Methodist Church to pray for East Anglia District.

We give thanks for the growing richness of the East Anglia District's partnership with West Harare District in Zimbabwe; for the Pray23 initiative that is encouraging people to rediscover the importance of prayer in our relationship with God; for the ministry amongst the deaf community across East Anglia and the faithful resilient ministry of the many circuit stewards across the district.

Please pray for the work of school governors at the Leys School and Culford School; the training and implementation of a new District Reconciliation Team; the New Places for New People guiding team as they consider possible projects for mission across the District and the growing partnership and collaboration with Bedfordshire. Essex and Hertfordshire District.

Enfold me in the stillness of being, As you unfurl my true self To the ocean light of perfect love.

It is enough to wait, In a wordless silence, that grows thick With the expectance of you.

I pour out myself, To the passing tide of goodness, Lost in the vast ocean of love.

I am not afraid to be held and possessed, By the love that spoke me into being, And gently calls me back To the place of true rest.

A place both familiar and strange, The heart of myself, in the heart of Christ, Caught in the living flame of holy love. *Julian Pursehouse, District Chair, East Anglia District ©The Methodist Church*

Please pray for your family, your church and bring your concerns and your interpretation of the needs of the world and others to God.

Holy and righteous God, you raised Christ from the dead and glorified him at your right hand. Let the words of scripture, fulfilled in Jesus your Son, burn within our hearts and open our minds to recognize him in the breaking of bread. Amen.

Revised Common Lectionary Prayers, copyright © 2002 Consultation on Common Texts

Hymn 82 - O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIPJ-5TqG0c>

O Lord my God! when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works Thy hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed:

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!*

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
And hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze;
Refrain

And when I think that God His Son not sparing,
Sent Him to die-I scarce can take it in.
That on the cross my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin:
Refrain

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home-what joy shall fill my heart!
Then shall I bow in humble adoration
And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art!
Refrain

Stuart K Hine (1899-1989)

The Grace

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. Amen.