



Service: 19 April 2020

Rev. Jannet Mudavanhu

"Christ at the Heart of our Resurrections & Struggles"

Watch on YouTube: [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#), [Part 3](#)

OPENING PRAYER

We gather as people on a journey!
We believe and we also have doubts
We are imperfect humans
And still beloved by you.
As we are gathered in our homes
Speak to us O God
Inspire our hearts and guide our actions
We come to you for worship, just as we are. **Amen**

HYMN

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CxA0TFe3-Uo>

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidst me come to Thee
O Lamb of God, **I come**

Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot
O Lamb of God, I come, **I come.**

Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,

With fears within and foes without
O lamb of God, **I come.**

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind –
sight, riches, healing of the mind
Yea, all I need, in thee to find,
O Lamb of God, **I come.**

Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relief
Because thy promise I believe
O Lamb of God,
I come x2.

PASTORAL PRAYER

God of limitless mercy: We come in response to your gentle nurturing of us as we travel through life with all its challenges and blessings. Gracious God, as the Compassionate Carer of all vulnerable people, we give our thanks and praises for the way you support and strengthen us when we are at our weakest points in life and living. There are many times when we are overwhelmed by the pressures of life; and that is when we are most in need of your presence, to nurture us, as you walk beside us, giving us the trust in you we need; and forgive us when we are distracted and lose our way. Be the one to whom we turn, and the one whose hand we hold. We pray that you banish our fears with the glorious memories of the resurrection of our Saviour Jesus Christ. And remind us again, that through all our troubles, doubts, and fears, your power, mercy and love are with us.

We continue to pray for all the nations of the world, as the road to recovery from covid 19 is still long but we are grateful especially for those who are in the forefront of this battle. We pray that you surround them with your presence. We pray for members of our own family church and those in their bubbles, we pray for those who are not feeling well and those getting increasingly anxious – may your peace be with them. This we ask, in the name of The Risen Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT (*Read by Loopy Church children*)

Reach out and touch someone,
As the Lord touched you
Bringing hope and healing,
Make life anew.

Reach out, and touch someone,
Many have not heard God's redeeming purpose
Set forth in his word.

Reach out and touch someone
On their own today
May they know your friendship
All along life's way.

Reach out and touch someone
Who is worn and sad
May our Christ-like spirit help them to be glad
Reach out!

(Adapted from Robert Anderson's Hymn: Reach Out and Touch.)

BIBLE READING – *John 20:19-29*

RELECTION

One week has now passed since we celebrated the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our popular acclamation we use on most resurrection Sundays "Christ is Risen - He is risen indeed"; even though it's now about seven days since we shared it, is still very much fresh in my mind. And so, it should be because, for us, it marks a significant event in our Christian history and our Christian faith. For this reason, I think, instead of sharing this acclamation once a year on our resurrection Sundays, we ought to declare it often because resurrection is a regular occurrence. For me, I think of resurrection

moments as what some might want to refer to as their ‘Eureka’ moments! And so, when such moments happen, they stay with us and brings to light related insights. And so, I think, we ought to cry out “Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!” for each ‘Eureka moment!!

However, for this year, I am very mindful, that this is an Easter like no other. This is an Easter that seem to be overshadowed by unprecedented events sparked by corvid 19 epidemic. It is surely, the most challenging season of our time for our nation as well as us as individuals. Corporately and individually, we have set compliance measures in place to follow for the benefit of us all. With those measures in place we are hearing positive outcomes as we will be going down to level 3 next week, but we also hear of the great pressures people are having to endure, giving rise to mental health related issues and domestic violence. In addition to it all, individuals also have their own personal difficulties and challenges to cope with.

And so, because of all these external real pressures weighing on us all, some of us might not be feeling like there is room for Easter Alleluia-He is risen moments. Instead you might be feeling as if this Easter acclamation is ringing hollow – because of the pressures around us.

As I was reflecting on our bible reading for today, I felt that probably most of us can relate to what the disciples might have been feeling after the Holy Week events with all the tensions around them. Probably secluded, alone, fearful and doubtful. They seem to have been

struggling. But one of them seem to have been struggling a bit more than other.

And this is Thomas – I see Thomas as:

- (1) Struggling to stay in his bubble with the other disciples (Thomas was not there when Jesus showed up on the evening of His resurrection – John 20: 1-23);
- (2) Struggling to keep away from the other disciples (After a time of absence from his ‘bubble’ with the other disciples – Thomas returned and joined them again John 20: 24-25);
- (3) Struggling to believe that Jesus had risen (on Thomas’ return, the other disciples informed him that they had seen Jesus but Thomas was finding it difficult to believe John 20: 24-25).

Even though it seems – all the disciples were struggling to cope, Thomas seemed to be the one voicing his struggles and doubts – and when he had Jesus had risen – he voiced it: “Unless I see the mark of the nails and put my finger in the in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe” v25! It is like Thomas was saying: ‘I cannot sing Alleluia He is risen because I am struggling to believe. Even though the other disciples didn’t actually voice their struggles, I think we can sense their struggle to believe the resurrection, from their actions after they heard the news of Jesus’ resurrection.

For instance, after Mary met Jesus that early morning, she went and told the disciples (John 20:11-18) – but they chose to remain behind

clocked doors – they didn't believe her (Mark 16: 9-11) – so they didn't celebrate the resurrection. John and Peter (John 20: 1-10) rushed off to the tomb to check if what Mary had told them was true – they did notice the tomb was open and empty – eventhough John said the disciple whom Jesus loved believed (John himself) but his actions seem to suggest otherwise – On return, they remained behind locked doors and didn't celebrate. Why? – **I think they were all struggling with doubt!** (Matthew 28:17; Luke 24:11). They were struggling to accept the good news – they were struggling to accept this new and better chapter of their life - **they were struggling with the resurrection.** So, they didn't have the confidence to sing 'Alleluia He is risen!'

We can all relate to their dilemma in one way or another. For, us slowly but surely, we are easing out of corvid 19 and its effects. But the idea of getting back to normality after our significant time in lockdown has the likelihood of proving to be daunting and nerve-wrecking for many. We are bound to have all sorts of questions going through our minds:- Can be in regards to social distancing – when boarding buses or trains – you become suspicious of those around us – if anyone coughs – then oohhh, can you imagine the stares that that person will get?! Going back to work, school; and uni is going to be a little challenging, and for all this; I think we can relate to what the disciples might have been feeling – struggling with the good news – struggling with the resurrection.

However, on reading verse 19-24, it is encouraging to note that Jesus did not rebuke the disciples for their doubts and fears. Instead, he made himself known amongst them. **At the heart of their struggles and doubts, the Risen Christ placed himself - right at the heart of it all – breathing out HIS LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT v22**, just as God had breathed life into Adam and Eve during creation. **The Risen Christ was giving life to their suffocating spirit.**

We also ought to have the confidence that, **at the heart out our own struggles and doubts, Christ stands breathing out life giving spirit and pronouncing: PEACE BE WITH YOU.** With this, pronouncement, life begins to fill the ‘lungs of our soul’ and as we breath in, inhaling this life giving spirit, we are inflamed with the love of His peaceful presence! And once more it’s “Christ is risen, He is risen indeed moment! We suddenly we realise we are ‘back in the room’ with him who loves us most.

He meets us, even at the point when like Thomas, we doubt those around us, even at the point when we think, like Thomas, we need proof in order to believe.

I think as Easter people we don't need to feel the need to hide our struggles or banish our doubts, but **we ought to believe in spite of and alongside our doubts.**

Even in this, our fragile state, let us continue to do that which the Lord expect us to:- **WE ACT:** we reach out (phone calls/emails/zoom/texts and to use John Wesley’s words we continue to: Do all the good we can, by all the means we can, in all the ways we can, at all the places

we can, at all the times we can, to all the people we can, as long as ever we can. We continue to lookout for others heeding to our Risen Christ's Word: "As the Father send me, so I send you".

As we make decisions of life after Covid 19, life after lockdown, let us be encouraged to know that, eventhough our struggles doubts and fears may take long to overcome, even if some of those struggles, doubts and fears may also never leave us, **THE BEST OF ALL**, is that **CHRIST IS WITH US. He remains at the heart of our struggles** and little by little we will have those moments when we actually realise his presence within our struggle – **we will have those moments of conviction of His presence with us within our struggles, doubts and fears** - in those moments let us shout out loud: "**CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED! ALLELUIA! Amen.**

ANTHEM

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fiIE9iikIZk>

We are not alone, for God is with us
We are never alone, for God is with us
Now through all our days
Always, forever and ever We are not alone
And God will make us strong
We will press on for God is with.
Now through all our days we are never alone
Always forever and ever, we are never alone
Our God is with us Now.

BENEDICTION

Trust and love the Christ you cannot see
And let that bring you joy.
For that faith will bring the salvation of your soul.

And now, may the God who loves and resurrects us
Give you a good portion of the Holy Spirit
And a new birth into a living hope. **Amen.**