

Easter 3 2018 11 am St Marylebone Easter Peace

*In the name of the living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.*

The risen Jesus had made himself known to two of his disciples as he broke bread with them at Emmaus.

Having seen their risen Lord, the two disciples immediately rush back to Jerusalem, some 10 kilometers away, so that they can share this good news with their fellow disciples.

As they breathlessly begin to recount their story, Jesus himself comes and stands among them; he shows them his wounded hands and his broken side and, into their abject fear and bewilderment, he gives them his peace.

Just as he had opened the eyes of the disciples at Emmaus when he took, blessed, broke and shared bread, so now Jesus opens his disciples' minds as he shares the riches of the Scriptures with them.

Through sharing bread, enjoying fellowship and studying the scriptures together, the disciples are commissioned to go out from their place of mutual safety into the world beyond as reconcilers and healers,

as witnesses and evangelists, as the bringers of the peace the living Jesus has gifted to them.

Jesus' gift of peace to his disciples is central to the narrative of Luke/Acts; key to the way in which Luke folds together Easter, Ascension and Pentecost. For Luke it is this gift of God's peace – the peace which defies definition, which surpasses all understanding that transforms frightened and confused women and men into bold apostles.

For those who had accompanied Jesus through the all-too-short years of his peripatetic ministry peace was a commodity that had been in very short supply.

Wherever Jesus went, the crowds followed; if they were hungry, the crowds clamoured for food; if they had children with them, parents pushed and jostled in order to thrust their precious offspring at Jesus to be blessed; if they were sick, people cried out in pain out for Jesus and his disciples to heal them; and even those who mourned their dead wailed and howled and begged the builder carpenter from Nazareth to return their loved ones to life.

The disciples themselves had been unable to do these things; it was Jesus whom the crowds had wanted to

see. His were the signs people wanted to witness; his were the words they wanted to hear; his was the touch they wanted to feel either for themselves or for their loved ones.

But the Jesus who had been killed, the Jesus who had been sealed in a tomb, now stood now among his bereft, frightened, impotent disciples and he tells them that they are the women and men who will now carry forward his work: that rooted in Eucharist, fellowship and the study of scripture - and enfolded in his peace - they will be the ones who will now proclaim the Kingdom, heal the sick, raise the dead, proclaim liberty to the captive and restore sight to the blind.

The peace which Jesus promises his disciples is not a peace that is simply the absence of noise or conflict; the sort of packaged peace holiday companies try to sell through their luxury, pool-side villas on a deserted island, but a peace which is far beyond the everyday comprehension; the peace which alone can enfold hearts and minds into a unity of love which has been revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit; a deep eternal peace out of which the universe has been spoken and to which the universe will ultimately return; the peace which alone can banish fear, and which can hold in safety and love those to whom it is given.

This peace, is the peace which is God's alone to give; the peace which cannot be bought, or achieved or manufactured; the peace that is that pure and precious gift, ever-offered, ever-waiting to be received; the gift of deep inner peace, which does not depend on outward circumstance or environment, but solely on the One who gives it – Jesus, the wounded, crucified and risen Prince of Peace.

As we gather in fellowship to break bread and to study the scriptures, may the risen Lord Jesus come and stand among us; may we open our hearts and minds to receive his offered gift of peace: the peace which passes all understanding; the peace which alone keeps hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God; the peace which equips women and men, you and me, to be Christ's witnesses.

Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

He is risen indeed, alleluia!