

## PSALM 4 verses 1 – 8

<sup>1</sup>Answer me when I call to you, my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

<sup>2</sup>How long will you people turn my glory into shame? How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?

<sup>3</sup>Know that the LORD has set apart his faithful servant for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him.

<sup>4</sup>Tremble and do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.

<sup>5</sup>Offer the sacrifices of the righteous and trust in the LORD.

<sup>6</sup>Many, LORD, are asking, 'Who will bring us prosperity?' Let the light of your face shine on us.

<sup>7</sup>Fill my heart with joy when their grain and new wine abound.

<sup>8</sup>In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me dwell in safety.

## Luke 24 verses 36 – 49

<sup>36</sup>While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'

<sup>37</sup>They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. <sup>38</sup>He said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? <sup>39</sup>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.'

<sup>40</sup>When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. <sup>41</sup>And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, 'Do you have anything here to eat?' <sup>42</sup>They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup>and he took it and ate it in their presence.

<sup>44</sup>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.'

<sup>45</sup>Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup>He told them, 'This is what is written: the Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup>and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup>I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'

## **ACTS 3 verses 11 – 19**

<sup>11</sup> While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. <sup>12</sup> When Peter saw this, he said to them: 'Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? <sup>13</sup> The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. <sup>14</sup> You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. <sup>15</sup> You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. <sup>16</sup> By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see. <sup>17</sup> 'Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. <sup>18</sup> But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. <sup>19</sup> Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,

# THE THREE “R’S”

## READINGS:

***Psalm 4 verses 1-8; Luke 24 verses 36-48 and Acts 3 verses 11-19***

What a strange saying, and something of a confusing approach to education for young people – the 3 R’s. Ok, reading begins with an R. “Writing” – begins with a “w” and “rithmetic” – come off it ! And we wonder why some children fail at school !

Each of the readings included in the lectionary for this Sunday, offer a message of hope – something we all clung to throughout this time. Today, I want us to look at the promise of 3 “R’s” found in our readings today – rest, renewal, revival. The light at the end of the tunnel is getting brighter, or at least that is how it is seen by many. It has been a long dark year travelling through the “tunnel of pandemic”, of isolation, of frustration, of fear and loneliness. Vaccines have been devised and administered. Restrictions are being relaxed, Hopefully, common sense prevailing, life might be returning to some form of normality, even if it is not exactly as it was before. The excitement for some at being able to see family, of being able to travel slightly further afield, and for some that trip to the shops – if somewhat tentatively done – gives hope that things are getting better.

David the Psalmist, as recorded for us in ***Psalm 4 verses 1-8*** reminds us that because of our experiences of answered prayers in days past, that we can ***“boldly approach the throne of grace” (Hebrews 4 verse 16)*** once again and that with the Psalmist in the first verse of this Psalm we can cry out ***“Answer me when I call to you, O My righteous God.”*** This is not the cry of someone being full of themselves, this is the cry of one who is living out their faith, trusting in the promises of God to hear every cry. As you follow through this Psalm, you realise that this is the prayer who has experienced God who gave relief and heard prayers in the past (***verse 1***). It is that reassurance that we read of through the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and we sing in the hymn based on those words ***“Because of the Lord’s great love, we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness” (Lamentations 3 verses 22-23).***

David goes on to address his enemies as those who have brought shame and dishonour to God’s name, but that he will stand in the face of such disgrace because his confidence is in the Lord. There may be times when we feel that we are on our own, that somehow God has deserted us but even as the prophet Elijah felt alone, so as God reassured him that he was not, neither are we. The doubters and naysayers are around us, doubting the promises of God, doubting that He cares and by the end of his short prayer, David is rejoicing once again and rests in the peace of God who sees and hears.

***Luke chapter 24*** records for us the encounter on the road to Emmaus and the subsequent appearance to the despondent followers of Jesus opening their eyes to the reassurance of his presence. Afterwards they headed off to find the other disciples in Jerusalem who were now declaring that ***“It is true. The Lord is risen and has appeared to Simon” and to this they added their own testimony of the risen Lord (verses 34-35).*** In ***verse 36*** we read that then Jesus Himself appeared among them, and said ***“Peace be with you!”*** They felt somewhat afraid, thinking that they had seen a ghost, suddenly appearing in a room with closed doors. Faith and hope and anticipation were momentarily eclipsed by fear and uncertainty. How like us. Into our uncertainty the Lord speaks words of reassurance, and presents us with the evidence on which to ground our faith – the marks of his suffering (***verse 39***). Proof of a bodily resurrection came when Jesus then shared some broiled fish with them, something a ghost would not be able to do.

The period of Easter had been a difficult and confusing time for the followers of Jesus, but just as faith and trust enabled the Psalmist to rest in the peace of God, so these disciples and followers of

Jesus experienced that same peace, and He promises to endue His followers with resurrection power with the coming of the Holy Spirit (**verse 49**). The power that is at work within us is the same power by which Christ was raised from the dead! The Risen Lord Jesus, renews us, gives us the peace (**Luke 24 verse 36**) whereby we might rest in the safety of the LORD (**Psalms 4 verse 8**).

In **Acts chapter 3**, we read of the healing of a crippled man who used to sit begging below a gate called 'Beautiful' – a huge brass gate which, according to Josephus, far outshone all the silver and gold in the Temple. When the crippled man asked Peter and John for alms, Peter famously replied, **'Silver or gold I do not have., but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk'** (**Acts 3 verse 6**). Then we read that Peter took him by the hand and the crippled man received strength. This was the same gesture, and the same word ('arise') as Jesus had used in raising Jairus' daughter, in **Luke chapter 8**. The one-time crippled man leapt to his feet, and entered the Temple with Peter and John, **'walking and jumping, and praising God'** (**Acts 3 verse 8**).

Doctor Luke emphasises the fact of this healing by referring to the man 'walking' at least three times. Not only did he walk, but he jumped around and praised God. That would certainly grab peoples' attention. In these post-Easter days, is God telling us to arise, to "take up our bed, and walk'. Like Lazarus, to come out of the "tombs" which has held us for so long now. Maybe, for some, this past year has been a time of resting and of spending time with God in the quietness of our own homes. For others it might have felt like being buried away. Maybe now we are hearing the words **'Arise, shine' for the glory of the Lord has risen upon you (Isaiah 60 verse 1)**. Now is the time to tap into the resurrection power which is ours in Christ Jesus (**Romans 8 verse 11**).

The crowd gathered in Solomon's 'Porch' of the Temple, did not gather to hear a Sermon, but to witness and wonder at the results of a miracle (**Acts 3 verse 10**), but Peter was not missing this second opportunity to address his countrymen on the back of an undeniable mighty act of God. Firstly, he questioned their amazement. This mighty work is not on account of our power or piety he told his listeners and then lays in with the hard facts of what had happened, telling his listeners that he, himself, was just as guilty as those who put Jesus to death. But then came the good news, for all humanity, that God raised Him from the dead (**verse 15**), and that it was by His name, through faith in His name, that this healing had been accomplished in their presence. Peter goes on to tell that what had been done had been in ignorance, but was not to make an excuse on behalf of the offenders, but in order to inform them, and us, of the need and the availability of repentance. That when we turn in faith to Jesus, our sins are blotted out, erased from the file.

This past year has been a long, difficult and for some a tragic year. The light at the end of the tunnel is getting brighter. The signs more promising. It is when we trust in the promises of God – past, present and future – that we, like the Psalmist find our rest in Him; like the disciples that we are renewed and reinvigorated to share the good news of the Gospel; and like the crippled man that we are refreshed and revived, led into a new life, a life of praise and worship. It is by spending time in God's word, resting in His presence, trusting in His resurrection power, that we can experience all that, in His grace, He longs to bestow on us.

As we continue to worship and serve Him in this world, may the Lord bless us with continuing understanding of what He has accomplished for us. May we fulfil our mission in the power of the Spirit and see fruit for our labours in this present 'waiting' time, and to Him be all the praise and honour and glory.