

EASTER 3

18/4/21

CAVES BEACH

CALL TO WORSHIP

God's Word calls us to thanksgiving.

"Give thanks to God; God is good, God's love is eternal."

God's Word calls us to praise.

"Praise God! All who serve God, all who worship in the Lord's house."

God's Word calls us to community in faith.

"How wonderful it is, how pleasant for God's people to live together in harmony."

God's Word calls us to freedom and justice.

"God hears the groans of the prisoners, and sets free those who were doomed to die."

Opening Prayer surprise, hope, justice, truth: God, presence of love: God's

Surprise us, O most glorious God!

Surprise us with your message of hope, when the world seems a hostile place.

Surprise us, O most caring God!

Surprise us with your sustaining presence, when we do not know where to turn.

Surprise us, O most challenging God!

Surprise us with your way of justice and truth, when the easy way beckons.

Surprise us, O most revealing God!

Surprise us with the face of Jesus Christ, in the most unexpected of persons. Amen.

HYMN 210 O for a thousand tongues to sing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-dEfz6Vms>

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

In 1 John 3:1 are told: See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are.

We are God's children when we rise from our beds in the morning;

We are God's children all throughout the day;

We are God's people when we are gardening and playing,

And dancing and praying;

When we are cooking and cleaning,

Working and report writing;

When we are in the car, at the table, in the shower, in the shops,

When we are walking and riding and swimming and running;

When we stumble, when we fly,

when we laugh and when we cry

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God;

and that is what we are.

God, there are many reasons why sometimes we get life wrong.

Sometimes we just don't know what we don't know.

Sometimes we misunderstand the situation.

Sometimes we haven't taken the time to look around and see what was in plain sight, and to think about anything or anyone but ourselves.

Sometimes we deliberately choose to stir the pot to get a reaction regardless of whether the outcome causes harm.

Sometimes we choose inaction when we could have intervened because we are anxious and afraid.

Sometimes we thoughtlessly just want what we want and refuse to let your word influence us.

When we get life wrong and bring about harm and cause hurt,

extend your mercy and grace to us, forgive us we pray.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

No matter our choices, no matter the rightness or wrongness of our actions – we are never separated from the love of God, this is Easter's reassurance. We are loved and forgiven people, open your hearts and minds to this.

READINGS

- Acts 3:12-19

When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, "You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? 13 The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. 14 But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, 15 and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. 16 And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.

17 "And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. 18 In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. 19 Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out,

- Luke 24:36b-48

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." 37 They were startled and terrified, and

thought that they were seeing a ghost. 38 He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” 40 And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. 41 While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate in their presence.

44 Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, 46 and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things.

HYMN 609 May the mind of Christ my saviour

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

SERMON

This week’s Gospel Lectionary looks at the resurrection story from Luke. I felt that it is time this week to move our focus on to the outcomes of the Easter.

I am going to look at the passage we just heard from Acts. What struck my attention was an earlier part of Acts where it says in 3:16: “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 see.”

For me this passage brings out the healing power of Jesus and how, even today, He can create healing in our lives. When I refer to healing I am not restricting the concept. It includes physical healing as well as emotional healing, psychological healing, healing of shattered memories and spiritual healing. I am sure that each one of us at times would admit that we are all vulnerable, frail and in need of the sort of healing touches that Jesus offers.

As we look at the passage we need to understand the context in which it comes in Acts. Earlier in Acts we are told that both Peter and John had gone up to the Temple in Jerusalem to pray and as they came through the Temple Gate they healed a lame man.

There is more to this than a just simple physical healing. Because of his affliction this man would not have been able to fully enter into the Temple as people with any visible disability were excluded from the inner sanctums of the temple. This poor man was stopped from being in the inner courts of Temple in where they believed God's presence to be. In this passage we can also see that God does not put barriers before us because we might not be perfect. God's actions in Christ bring us to the point where we are perfect in His sight.

The people milling around the entrance who witnessed this healing miracle were amazed and Peter addresses the crowd asking the question: "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?"

Peter was concerned that people were looking more at them as the source of the miraculous healing power, not God. The general concept of God held by the witnesses at that time was that God wouldn't have been involved in personal miracles. They thought that God was remote and unmoved by human suffering. Peter was ensuring that the witnesses recognised that the healing power was from God alone and not the disciples. God was active in their world.

In order to reinforce this approach Peter asks them why they are surprised. Looking back at their national history he asks them to reflect how God had constantly acted to bring about healing in the past, so why should it be any different now.

Turning to ourselves why should we also not be equally surprised when God heals us?

Why not expect God to help us fulfil the full potential of our lives?

Just think back to the stories in the Bible, the history of the Christian faith and we can see God in action. We worship a God who is constantly healing and renewing our world and our lives.

Now in the passage that we are reflecting on Peter takes an interesting approach. Rather than simply trying to convince the crowd of God's healing power in verses 13-15 he says: *"The God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead."*

Here Peter confronts the crowds with the painful reality of their rejection of Jesus. This is so that he can emphasise the free grace that God offers to each of them, and this carries on even to us today.

It is here that the central point of the story comes to the fore. In order to receive the grace and acceptance people need to recognise their *need for grace*. Their failings and rejection of Christ can only be addressed when people recognise their real needs.

This equally applies to us today. It is only as we recognise our failings that we can receive grace. So often in our world people like to have the approach that God is something like a *genie in the magic lamp* who can be called on just to simply grant all their wishes. Some people even get angry when God doesn't do exactly as they demand.

It is to address this approach that Peter points out that we can only receive God's powerful healing grace when we come to fully realise our need for it. It is only as we come before God in humble prayer, acknowledging our failings and needs, that we can gain access to the healing. Peter clearly says that the disciples are witnesses to this fact.

It is in acknowledging our needs that we can open ourselves up for healing. We all know that the feeling of guilt is not a healthy place to be. It needs to be addressed before it becomes fear and despair.

I am sure that all of us have at times been less than perfect. If we build up a reservoir of guilt we might end up developing a fear of connecting with God, worrying that we might never measure up. We are fortunate that there is no need to go down this path as there is the constant offer of grace and healing from God.

This comes through our relationship with Jesus who died for each of us. In Acts 3:16 Peter says: "And by faith in His name, His name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you."

Here is the crunch in our journey through grace. Peter is stressing that God responded to the brokenness of the lame man. That man knew all about his brokenness so God gave him healing and a new life. This is a metaphor for what God offers us.

The man was not healed by his own efforts.

Neither Peter nor John healed this lame man.

It was through the man's faith in God that he was healed.

At times I am sure that many of us have felt broken, vulnerable and weak, or we were consumed by guilt about something. We might have felt that we did not have the strength to keep going. It is through the outreach from God that we can start to heal. In Psalm 23 we read: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me..."

From this we can discern that it is from God's reaching out into our brokenness that we avoid being left in a pit of despair.

From this passage we can have confidence that God responds to our tough times and pulls us out of the pit of despair so we are not left suffering.

- God meets us with grace and love filled with compassion so that we might receive healing through our faith in Jesus.
- Jesus' sacrifice connects us directly with God's healing power.

All we need to do is recognise this wonderful gift and respond to it.

HYMN 129 Amazing grace

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A0gLntLIBYw>

OFFERING PRAYER

Living Spirit, be companion to these gifts as we send them on their way, may they be a revelation of the goodness of God to all who receive them. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Risen Christ,

Open our eyes to what you would reveal to us -

How to heal broken hearts and spirits,

How to feed the hungry and provide shelter to those without a home,

How to speak words of peace into situations of conflict,

How to offer hope to those are weighed down by worry,

How to see the face of a sister or brother in all those who pass our way,

How to be in awe of creation and tend and care for the earth,

How to walk in the world with patience and goodness and joy

And to know that you are with us always.

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours

now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN 491 Father welcomes all his children

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIXrP0u55K0&t=13s>

BENEDICTION

We are God's children, forgiven, loved and blessed, and knowledgeable in the ways of God's compassion and justice. We leave this time of worship readied and prepared to be Christ's people, bearers of hope and joy in the world.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rw1sjc3JVrw>