

# Text – Sunday Service 26/4/2020

## Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2020

**Welcome & Call to worship** (colin)

**Hymn 'I stand amazed in the presence'**

**Opening prayer** (colin)

**Psalm 30** (colin)

**Childrens' address 'Alive'**

**Christian Aid week** (Hilary Stephenson)

**Reading John 20:19-31** (Josh Kennedy)

**Video-** 'Doubting Easter'

**Sermon** (colin)

**Prayers for Others** (Daphne Twinem)

**Prayers (overseas partner & Lord's Prayer)** (Colin)

**Song 'You are my saviour'** (Ian Pope)

**Blessing** (Colin)

Welcome to this morning's service of worship for Regent St Methodist Church, Newtownards. To all of you in the congregation a big hello and I hope you are continuing to be safe and well. Also I want to give a special welcome to any of you who may be visiting our site today and I pray that you will be encouraged as we spend time in worship.

I just want to make a few quick announcements before we begin our service. Firstly a reminder that next week being the first Sunday in May we hope to celebrate communion together in our own homes. Unlike the rest of the service, which will be pre-recorded and posted early on Sunday morning as usual, we will be looking to celebrate communion together 'live' and so you will have to tune in to our website at 12 noon if you wish to participate and you will also need to have some bread and juice available.

The Sunday following, the 10<sup>th</sup> of May, will be our annual service in support of Christian Aid. We hope to have a special service recorded for you that morning and we would love it if following the service at 12 noon, as many of you as possible could sit down and share in a bread & cheese fundraising lunch for C Aid. For those of you on Zoom we will try to come together that way around our lunch and for those who aren't you can simply send us a photo of you having your lunch and we will show those the following week. Hilary Stephenson is our church Christian Aid rep and she will be reminding us about that later in our service. But now let us take a short moment of quiet as we prepare our hearts to worship God. So let's hear some words from the book of first Peter as we come ...

***'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...' 1 Peter 3:1***

We now come before God in song as we sing together our opening hymn 'I stand amazed in the presence

Of Jesus the Nazarene,

And wonder how He could love me,

A sinner, condemned, unclean.

*How marvellous! How wonderful!*

*And my song shall ever be:*

*How marvellous! How wonderful!*

*Is my Saviour's love for me!*

He took my sins and my sorrows,

He made them His very own;

He bore the burden to Calvary,

And suffered and died alone.

*How marvellous!.....*

When with the ransomed in glory

His face I at last shall see,

'Twill be my joy through the ages

To sing of His love for me.

*How marvellous!.....*

**So now let us pray.**

Lord God we come once more into your Holy presence – singing '*How marvellous! How wonderful! And our song shall ever be; How marvellous! How wonderful! Is my Saviour's love for me!*

God of majesty this morning we marvel again at the amazing truth that You the perfect Lord of righteousness, the King of the cosmos, would so love us that You would send your Only Son into our fallen world of pain. We are amazed, as we stand in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene, for we see the nail marks on his hands and the wound in his side, and they tell us more powerfully than any words just how deeply, how completely, we are loved...even though we were sinners, condemned, unclean.

Lord faced with Jesus' perfect sacrificial love for us... we grow quiet and in a short moment of silence we confess our sins and we ask again for fresh grace....

*Lord You took our sins and our sorrows, You made them your very own; You bore our burdens to Calvary and suffered and died alone... Lord as we look again to what You have done for us we hear the good news of the gospel that our sins are forgiven in Jesus Christ..*

So we ask you now God of grace, to continue to lead us in worship for your glory alone.

Amen

Our Old Testament Reading is taken from **Psalm 30.**

<sup>1</sup> I will exalt you, Lord, for you lifted me out of the depths and did not let my enemies gloat over me.

<sup>2</sup> Lord my God, I called to you for help,

and you healed me.

<sup>3</sup>You, Lord, brought me up from the realm of the dead; you spared me from going down to the pit.

praise his holy name.

<sup>5</sup>For his anger lasts only a moment,

but his favour lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.

We continue, this third Sunday in Easter, to look at some of the events that happened that first Easter. This week we see how one particular disciple struggled with believing. We are now going to have a video animation called '**alive**' and following on from that Hilary will share with a little about Christian aid and then Josh Kennedy will read our gospel reading.

- Video 'Alive'
- Christian aid announcement (Hilary)

**John:20:19-31** (Josh Kennedy)

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" <sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

<sup>21</sup> Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." <sup>22</sup> And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

<sup>26</sup> A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

<sup>28</sup> Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>29</sup> Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

<sup>30</sup> Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. <sup>31</sup> But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

**Video-**'Doubting Easter'

**Reflection**— Whether we like it or not many of us at one point or another probably ended up with one of these.... It might have grown out of how we looked, or had something to do with our personality, or it might even have just rhymed with our name... Yes I am thinking about Nicknames and I have to admit to have had several down through the years. In primary school there was the inventive 'Colin cauliflower', I think that was simply to do with my name starting with the letter C! Then i was called 'Minty' in Theological college because I always

seemed to have a packet of mints to share during study time! However the Nickname I remember best is probably the one I would like to forget the most. Growing up in a North Belfast housing estate I will always remember, in my early days at grammar school, earning the Nickname 'Waaa' because that was how I responded once in class when I didn't hear the teacher properly.

Yes unsurprisingly I never did warm to the nickname Waa... and so sometimes I wonder how the disciple Thomas would have felt after being given the name ...**Doubting**.

I wonder if Thomas could speak to us now would he point out how unfair that Nickname was? Would he point back in the gospel story, perhaps to John chapter 11 and remind us how he was the disciple who spoke up after Jesus had told them that he was going back up to Judea to 'wake up Lazarus' Jhn 11:11? All the disciples had been worried after Jesus had spoke and they pointed out to him that the last time he was there the 'Jews' had tried to stone him. However it was Thomas who spoke up saying "*Let us also go so that we can die with him*" Jhn 11:16.

And Thomas might continue by saying, look, later on when Jesus told us that he was leaving and asked us *not to let our hearts be troubled but just believe in him, for we knew where he was going*... I wasn't the only one who didn't know what he was talking about...I was just the only one brave enough to come out and say it! Jhn 14:5

Thomas might also point to the other disciples and say that he was far from the only one to have deserted, denied and doubted their master. No, Thomas might say, I just happened to be absent that first Easter evening and so I didn't see Jesus. Do you think any of the other disciples would have reacted differently if they hadn't been there? In fact Thomas might ask us, how do you think you would have responded if you were told by your friends that they had seen your teacher who you knew was dead?

Finally, perhaps, Thomas might point us forward and ask us to consider how his life and ministry developed after he had seen the risen Jesus. Yes this part isn't in the bible and we can't be completely sure of it all. However Church tradition strongly links Thomas with being the first Christian missionary to India and possibly China as well. What is undeniable is that the historic 'Mar Thoma' church of south India names Thomas as their founding missionary and there is a strong tradition that he was finally martyred by being stabbed with a spear near modern day Chennai (Madras).

Yes Thomas might ask us to consider all of this before we labelled him with the Nickname 'doubting'. But the truth is I don't think he would, instead I believe he would simply point us to Jesus..... You see the truth is that we are all on that journey of believing. We all have our moments when we are faced with fear or stress or simply something we don't understand and we experience those pangs of doubt. Perhaps it's a long offered prayer that seems to us to have been unanswered. Or maybe it's a particular struggle that we seem to keep coming back to in life and we can't help but think we should be better by now! Or maybe we like Thomas just want to 'see' something for ourselves....

Well this morning we stop and remember that Jesus didn't discard Thomas because of his struggles. No it seems that on Jesus second visit to the trembling disciples actually made a point of offering Thomas what he had asked for.... *Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.*" Jhn 20:27. Yes perhaps there was a mild rebuke in Jesus voice as maybe he had hoped for more from Thomas... Nevertheless he offered Thomas what he needed at that moment and he will provide what we need too.....

Yes I believe that at times Jesus may well stir our faith through what we see... It could be a clear answer to prayer, or it might be when someone known to us comes unexpectedly to faith or it may even be a personal supernatural experience in the form of a dream, vision or something special. Yes at times God will allow us to walk by 'sight' ... Yet that isn't ultimately what Jesus wanted from Thomas and it is not what he desires for us...Rather Jesus wants us to trust Him and '*walk by faith , not sight*' 2 Cor 5:7 But Jesus isn't asking us to do this on our own. No as John tells us at the end of His gospel here in vs 31 we have the witness of the Word that continually points us back to Jesus. So too we also have the witness of The Holy Spirit in the lives of all who trust in Christ Jhn 20:22. Yes we are not asked to simply walk blindly in faith; rather Jesus through His word and through the Holy Spirit will illuminate the way. The way of trusting him despite our fears and doubts, the way of faith, the way that leads to life in his name.

**Prayers for others**– (Rev Daphne Twinem)

**Overseas partner & Lord's prayer.**

The Methodist Church Togo is one of our District Link churches, being linked with our Southern District for the next few years for learning and mission. Many of Togos' Methodist congregations are to the south but they have a fervent missionary heart and are pushing into the north and planting churches there despite lacking material resources.

At the moment the Church is concerned about loss of income due to closed churches but also about how its mission work will be affected. Another concern of the church is those whose businesses have had to close. Many operate on the back of loans and do not have government furloughing support nor the safety net of insurance. How will those businesses recover?

Let us pray for our partners at this time.

Lord, we think of countries where healthcare is not as developed as our own. We can only guess at the difficulty in responding to such a pandemic.

We thank you for the Methodist Church Togo's clinics and the relief they offer communities.

May those clinics be able to help those affected by the corona virus in some meaningful way. May the church's leaders be wise and continue to remember their missionary zeal after the pandemic passes.

We pray for those with businesses in Togo. As their income stops and loans have to be paid, we pray for their survival and the understanding of creditors.

May this experience not shrink their number nor commitment to the gospel. Lord, protect Togo's people at this time. Amen.

We finish our prayers by saying the Lord's Prayer together.

**Song- 'You are my saviour'** (Ian Pope)

**Blessing** We finish by sharing the grace together. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all forevermore. amen