

Pandemic Times

Issue 56

Sunday 18 April 2021

From the Pastor



Friends,

I'm overjoyed to be worshipping with you again following some time off last week. Thank you for your continued prayers for my dad. I spent some time with him and he is due to recommence his chemotherapy later this month following some complications.

We remain in the season of Easter. Admittedly, it was only relatively recently that I understood the significance of Easter as a season. Previously, in my mind Easter was a day in the year where we celebrate, with gusto, the resurrection of Christ (and something about chocolate). But for centuries the church has known resurrection to be so much more than a single event. Jesus is still Alive! More than 2000 years after Jesus glorious resurrection we, as believers, continue to move from death to life every single day we put our hope and trust in Him. Easter is more than a day, it is a way of being for us as Christians, as the Apostle Paul reminds us:

“For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been

set free from sin.” - Romans 6: 5-7

And so resurrection remains our theme these Sundays leading up to Pentecost. I was grateful for my friend and colleague, Dr. Samuel Hildebrandt, filling the pulpit last week and reminding us of the death-to-life experiences of the disciples as models for us. This week we'll continue to ask the question, 'what does Jesus resurrection mean for us, today' as we focus on another encounter with the resurrected Christ in Scripture.

We're so hoping for something of a resurrection out of Covid restrictions too. Recent government changes allow more movement and engagement with others, although largely outdoors. I see on social media that some of you have made the most of this. I'm aware also that others remain cautious. We as a church are continuing to monitor things closely and are looking to make plans for us to gather in safe ways in the coming weeks again. We'll continue to keep you updated.

As promised, now that restrictions allow, I'm making myself available for garden visits, meet ups in the parks etc. with small family groups. I've already had the privilege of meeting with some this week and it's been wonderful! If you would like to me up on this please don't hesitate to contact me.

Peace,

Mick

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Daily Reading and Prayer Guide

Date	Reading	Pray for
Monday 19th April	Luke chapter 12:35–59	Sigrid Nwator and family
Tuesday 20th April	Luke chapter 13:1–21	Myra O'Hara and family
Wednesday 21st April	Luke chapter 13:22 to chapter 14:11	Michael Okechukwa and family
Thursday 22nd April	Luke chapter 14:12–35	John and Vera Packard
Friday 23rd April	Luke chapter 15	Sandra and Mike Pitt and family
Saturday 24th April	Catch up	Grant and Crys Pettitt
Sunday 25th April	Luke chapter 16	Fay Powell

This Week's Prayer Requests

- ◇ For the newly formed tenants and residents association (TARA group) formed here in Brooklands and Erica who leads this. They are keen to work closely with the church in blessing the people in the community.
- ◇ For those in our congregation and community feeling isolated and lonely in these days.
- ◇ We continue to pray for healing for Marie (David Walker's mum), Mick (Mick Kane's dad), John B, Jon F, Isobel, Claire S and Bill Ellis. And also for those with private physical needs.
- ◇ For the Church Board as they continue to wrestle with decisions regarding the re-opening of the church and use of the building safely.
- ◇ For those who tune in to worship online that we have yet to meet and get to know.

Series: Encounters with the Resurrected Christ (1)

Matthew chapter 28 verses 16 to 20

Following the conclusion of our series, 'encounters on the road to the cross,' leading up to Easter we are continuing on the narrative because here is some good news: the story does not end on the cross! Aren't we grateful for that? The death of our God and saviour was not the end. In many ways it was only the beginning. Or perhaps it ushered in a new beginning. That's what we celebrate in the resurrection. That a new day has dawned on the earth and as a result we too can step from darkness into light, from death into life! (Dr. Samuel Hildebrandt did a great job preaching this very message last week!) And so our new preaching series is a little bit of a sequel to the last one. Following the cross we are now looking at encounters with the resurrected Christ and asking ourselves the question: What does it mean for me that Jesus has risen from the grave? In today's reading we have Matthew's answer to that question.

A pastor of mine once told me that there are two ways to read the Bible: deep and wide. To read the Bible widely is to read vast sections at a time which allows for us to see the grand narratives of the Scriptures. Only when standing back and understanding the long story arc of the Bible can we fully appreciate God's unrelenting pursuit of humanity driven by his unchanging love for them. That's what it means to read the Bible widely. But we should also read the Bible deeply, taking shorter passages and refusing to rush through them, mulling over the meaning of each and every word as through God is speaking them directly to us. That's deep reading. Today's passage is short and so allows for us to read it deeply over the next few moments.

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth

has been given to me.

It's interesting that this resurrection encounter occurs in Galilee; perhaps resurrection involves some kind of movement or, action, if you like. But the more significant detail about where this occurs was the fact that it took place on a mountain. Mountains are significant in the Gospel of Matthew. It was on a mountain that Jesus delivered his famous sermon (Matt 5-7). It was also on a mountain that he was transformed in glory (Matt 17:1-8). But the most significant parallel here is that it was also on a mountain where Jesus was offered all the Kingdoms of the world if he would bow down to him at the very beginning of his ministry. And despite the fact that Jesus refused this offer here he stands at the end of the Gospel with all authority in heaven and on earth. Jesus is vindicated in his ways of peace, love and sacrifice and the devil is proven to be what he is - a liar! Never underestimate the power of the devil's lies. In fact, there is a warning in this passage about just how destructive those lies are in the third word of this passage - eleven. This is the first time the disciples are called such as a reminder of the betrayal and death of Judas Iscariot.

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

And so Jesus has won! He has defeated sin and death and made a way for us to enter into that same resurrected life. So what? Well, here's what: go and make disciples. Go and replicate what I did for you! Now, I don't know what your understanding of discipleship is but mine comes from the description given Mark chapter 3: "14 He ap-

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At Brooklands, we are big enough to be part of a world-wide denomination, yet small enough to invite you to make our church your home. Please visit our website and contact us if you would like to get in touch or need more information on any of our events.

During the Coronavirus pandemic, we are holding weekly services on our YouTube channel, starting at 10:30 am each Sunday.

We look forward to welcoming you to our fellowship!

Manchester Brooklands Church of the Nazarene, Registered Charity No: 1159881

pointed twelve that they might be with him.” In many ways it’s as simple as that. The best way to make disciples is to gather with others (be with them) and live out your resurrected life! Yes it speaks about teaching and baptizing but the most effective way we can communicate our faith is by living it out the presence of other people! In fact, I reckon that makes the teaching part easier as people will ask curious questions about Christ alive in us. That’s effective discipleship!

And baptism is so important also. I am so looking forward to the day we baptise people in this pool again. Baptism is the symbolic act that points the reality of rebirth, new life and resurrection in Christ Jesus. But here’s what I want us to see here. Baptism happens within the context of community (discipleship, being together), and we are baptised in the name of God who is in and of himself a community (Father, Son and Spirit). I think if you are reading this sermon you might want to take a moment to *try and get your head around that and wonder why that is so implicit.

But it’s the way this passage ends that I find so stunningly beautiful. The Gospel began with Emmanuel - God is with us - and here ends with a promise: I am with you! Although we can fully take this on board when we are needing comfort, healing, encouragement etc. The context of God’s promise of his presence is explicitly when we are sharing the faith: discipling, teaching, baptising. And again, before you make the mistake of excluding yourself as someone who doesn’t preach or teach remember that discipleship is simply you living out your resurrected life in the presence of others. If we do this, God will never leave us!

Amen!

Church re-opening. As you will have seen in the list of prayer requests, the Church Board is looking at how we can start re-opening church to the congregation. In the meantime, we do have some capacity for people to attend church on Sundays. If you would like to come to church on a Sunday over the coming weeks, please telephone Mark Bolton (07890 676039), Mick Kane (07545 622498) or Lucy Frost (07525 176993). We take measures to ensure church attendance is safe for everyone.