

# Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May – Morning Worship for Easter 5



Led by Charlotte Kalinsky, Ordinand  
<https://zoom.us/j/82311473640>

## Opening Words

Welcome in the name of Christ.  
God's grace, mercy and peace be with you  
**and also with you.**

## Gathering Prayer

Faithful one, whose word is life:  
come with saving power  
to free our praise,  
inspire our prayer  
and shape our lives  
for the kingdom of your Son,  
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## Hymn – Thy hand, O God, has guided

- 1 Thy hand, O God, has guided  
thy flock, from age to age;  
the wondrous tale is written,  
full clear, on every page;  
our fathers owned thy goodness,  
and we their deeds record;  
and both of this bear witness;  
one Church, one faith, one Lord.
  
- 2 Thy heralds brought glad tidings  
to greatest as to least;  
they bade them rise, and hasten  
to share the great King's feast;  
and this was all their teaching,

in every deed and word,  
to all alike proclaiming  
one Church, one faith, one Lord.

3 Through many a day of darkness,  
through many a scene of strife,  
the faithful few fought bravely,  
to guard the nation's life.  
Their gospel of redemption,  
sin pardoned, man restored,  
was all in this enfolded:  
one Church, one faith, one Lord.

4 Thy mercy will not fail us,  
nor leave thy work undone;  
with thy right hand to help us,  
the victory shall be won;  
And then, by men and angels,  
thy name shall be adored,  
and this shall be their anthem:  
one Church, one faith, one Lord.

Edward Hayes Plumptre (1821-1891) (Public Domain)

### Saying Sorry

Christ died to sin once for all, and now he lives to God.  
Let us renew our resolve to have done with all that is evil  
and confess our sins in penitence and faith.

cf Romans 6.10

Lord Jesus, you raise us to new life.  
Lord, have mercy.  
**Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you forgive us our sins.  
Christ, have mercy.  
**Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you feed us with the living bread.

Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

May the God of love and power  
forgive us and free us from our sins,  
heal and strengthen us by his Spirit,  
and raise us to new life in Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## **Readings by Ann Griffiths**

### **Acts 7:55-end**

#### **The Stoning of Stephen**

<sup>54</sup> When they heard these things, they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen. <sup>55</sup> But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. <sup>56</sup> 'Look,' he said, 'I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!' <sup>57</sup> But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. <sup>58</sup> Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. <sup>59</sup> While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' <sup>60</sup> Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he died.

For the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **John 14:1-14**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

#### **Jesus the Way to the Father**

**14** Jesus said 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. <sup>2</sup> In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come

again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. <sup>4</sup> And you know the way to the place where I am going.’ <sup>5</sup> Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?’ <sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup> If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.’

<sup>8</sup> Philip said to him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.’

<sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father”? <sup>10</sup> Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. <sup>11</sup> Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.

<sup>12</sup> Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup> I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup> If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **Reflection by Charlotte Kalinsky, Ordinand**

Friends, though we are gathered today through screens and across distances, we are no less the Church of God. Though we are not seated side by side in the same pews, we are joined heart to heart in the fellowship of Jesus Christ. Though distance may separate us, the Holy Spirit is not hindered by roads, walls, weather. Love is not confined by buildings, and the presence of God is not limited to one place. So, wherever you are this morning in a kitchen, a sitting room, a study, or alone with only this service for company know this with certainty: you are not forgotten, you are not outside the circle of worship, and you are not alone.

We hear in the Gospel reading this morning our Lord Jesus saying, “Do not let your hearts be troubled”. Believe in God, believe also in me.” And then in Acts we see Stephen, surrounded by anger and stones, his life slipping away and yet his heart is not overcome by fear. Instead, he looks up and sees the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father. It is as though the promise of Jesus in the Gospel finds its living expression in Stephen’s final moments. The words spoken in the upper room become flesh in the life and death of a faithful disciple. And perhaps that is where this word meets us today. Because we know what it is for hearts to be troubled. Life, even in the beauty of rural rhythms and familiar places, carries its share of weight. There are worries about health, about loved ones, about the future. There is grief that lingers quietly. There are changes we did not choose. There are moments when the world feels uncertain and faith feels fragile. And yet Christ speaks across time and space into our homes this day: “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” He does not say this lightly. He says it on the eve of His own suffering. He knows what is coming. He knows the cross stands before Him. And still, He offers peace. This is not the denial of pain; it is the presence of something stronger than pain. It is the steady assurance that even when the ground beneath us shifts, God remains firm.

Stephen knew that truth. As stones were raised against him, he did not fix his eyes on the faces filled with rage. He lifted his gaze higher. Scripture tells us he was filled with the Holy Spirit and saw the glory of God. And he said, “Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” Standing not seated. As though Christ Himself rises to receive His faithful servant. As though heaven cannot remain still while one of God’s own comes home. What kind of faith is this? It is not a faith that removes suffering. It is a faith that transforms how suffering is faced. Stephen’s circumstances were terrifying, but his vision was greater than his fear. He saw beyond the moment to the eternal. And that vision gave him courage not only to endure, but to forgive. As he died, he echoed the words of Jesus Himself: “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”

This is not human strength alone. This is the life of Christ within him. The same Jesus who, in John's Gospel, promises peace to troubled hearts is the Jesus who, in Acts, sustains a dying man with grace enough to forgive. And that same Christ is present with us now. Jesus says, "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places... I go to prepare a place for you." These are not distant, abstract words. They are spoken for moments exactly like Stephen's and moments like ours. They remind us that whatever we face in this life, it is not the end of the story. There is a home prepared. There is a welcome waiting. There is a place where sorrow will not follow, where tears will be wiped away, where love will not be interrupted by loss.

For those among us who carry grief, this promise is a gentle anchor. For those who feel the nearness of mortality whether our own or that of someone we love this is not empty comfort. It is the assurance that Christ has gone ahead, and He does not abandon His people. As He says, "I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also." And yet we are human, and like Thomas we sometimes say, "Lord, we do not know the way." We do not always understand what God is doing. We do not always see how things will unfold. We do not always feel certain in our faith. And Jesus answers not with a detailed plan, but with Himself: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

Not a set of instructions, but a relationship. Not a map, but a presence. The Christian life is not about having every answer; it is about trusting the One who is the answer. When the road ahead is unclear, we walk with Him. When the night feels long, we stay near Him. When our hearts are troubled, we listen again for His voice. And perhaps there is something especially fitting about hearing this as an online community. Because we have learned, in ways we did not expect, that the Church is not confined to a building. We have learned that prayer can rise from living rooms just as truly as from sanctuaries. We have learned that fellowship can stretch across distance. And in a quiet way, we have

learned what Stephen knew in his final moments: that heaven is not far away. The presence of Christ is not distant. The line between earth and heaven is thinner than we imagine.

Stephen looked up and saw it opened. And we, too, are invited to lift our eyes. Not to ignore the troubles around us, but to see beyond them. To remember that Christ is risen. That He stands for His people. That He intercedes for us. That He prepares a place. That He walks with us now. So friends, if your heart is troubled today, you are not alone. If your faith feels small, Christ is still strong. If your path feels uncertain, Christ is still the way. If your world feels dim, Christ is still the light. And if you feel weary, Christ is still your life.

May we, like Stephen, learn to look up even in hard moments. May we, like Thomas, bring our honest questions to the Lord. And may we, like those first disciples, learn to trust the One who speaks peace into troubled hearts. And in that trust, may we find courage for today, hope for tomorrow, and the quiet assurance that nothing not even death itself can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord Amen.

### **Affirmation of Faith**

Let us declare our faith  
in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Christ died for our sins  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he was buried;  
he was raised to life on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
afterwards he appeared to his followers,  
and to all the apostles:  
this we have received,  
and this we believe.  
Amen.**

cf I Corinthians 15.3-7

## Prayers of Intercession prepared by Sue Nelms

In our reading this morning we heard Jesus make the promise “If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it”. This morning we ask that we will glorify the name of the Father in whose name we pray.

We pray this morning for your earthly Church, that everyone who is part of it will act to glorify you in everything that we do. We thank you for the wonderful differences that enable us to be creative, to learn from each other and work alongside each other. We pray that this co-operation will always be stronger than any differences which may try to pull us apart. We thank you for the ministries of Archbishop Sarah Mullally and Pope Leo following their powerful meeting this week, showing the world two people from very different backgrounds coming together to pray to you. We thank you for Bishop Dagmar as she leaves our Diocese and pray that you will bless her as she moves to Edinburgh. We pray for Bishop Sarah as she prepares to begin her ministry with us and for everyone who will be working alongside her. We pray for the Lordsbridge Team and everyone who is part of its life whether ordained or lay. We thank you for our Ordinands Alistair and Charlotte as they prepare to begin the next stage of their ministerial journey. Bless and inspire them as they enter this new phase of their lives serving you.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Creator God, we thank you for the beautiful world that you created in our little blue planet. There is so much diversity in creation and yet it all fits and works together. Nothing can exist in isolation; we all need the other bits of creation. Help us to care for your creation rather than simply use and abuse it.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Loving Father you told us to love our neighbour as ourselves but at the moment our world is in crisis with wars, hostility and nations trying to exert their control over their neighbours. We know that this is not the way we should be behaving but your voice is not heard. We pray

for the brave people who do speak out truth in your name; protect them and make their voice heard in the noise. We pray for the world leaders who see aggression as the only way; we ask that you will overwhelm them with your love and change their hearts to see its truth. We pray for all leaders who make decisions that will touch so many lives; give them wisdom, humility, compassion and honesty rather than aggression, greed and coercive behaviour. We pray for the people who selflessly serve others, that they will be valued and appreciated rather than taken for granted. We pray for people who help to educate the next generation and ask that they will encourage them to keep open, enquiring minds eager to learn at every stage of their life.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father the community around Jesus was always important to him and we pray this morning for our community. We thank you for the people who make it what it is and we pray that you will walk alongside them as they journey through life's challenges. We pray for people who might be struggling whether financially, materially, mentally or spiritually. Help us to hear any cries for help and to help them and each other.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Caring Father we pray for everyone who is ill or in pain whether in body, mind or spirit. Ease any pain, strengthen any weakness, give hope where there is none. We pray for all who provide care, whether paid or unpaid. Help our world to value them rather than take them for granted.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Finally we pray for everyone who has died or is preparing to die and especially those people for whom today will be their last day on earth, whether expected or not. We pray that their souls will rest in peace and rise in glory to eternal life in your loving arms. We pray also for those left behind to grieve, whether that grief be new and sharp or

older but still painful. We pray especially for people who have no-one to remember them and ask that you will remember them.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your son Jesus Christ. Amen.**

### **Collect**

Almighty God,  
who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ  
have overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life:  
grant that, as by your grace going before us  
you put into our minds good desires,  
so by your continual help  
we may bring them to good effect;  
through Jesus Christ our risen Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever. **Amen**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**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.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours now and forever.  
Amen.**

## Hymn – How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

- 1 How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
in a believer's ear!  
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,  
and drives away his fear.
- 2 It makes the wounded spirit whole,  
and calms the troubled breast;  
'tis manna to the hungry soul,  
and to the weary rest.
- 3 Dear name! the rock on which I build,  
my shield and hiding-place,  
my never-failing treasury filled  
with boundless stores of grace.
- 4 Jesus! my Shepherd, Husband, Friend,  
my Prophet, Priest, and King,  
my Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,  
accept the praise I bring.
- 5 Weak is the effort of my heart,  
and cold my warmest thought;  
but when I see thee as thou art,  
I'll praise thee as I ought.
- 6 `Till then I would thy love proclaim  
with every fleeting breath;  
and may the music of thy name  
refresh my soul in death.

John Newton (1725-1807) © Sir Richard Mynors (Public Domain)

## Notices

## **Blessing**

May Christ,  
who out of defeat brings new hope and a new future,  
fill us with his new life;  
and the blessing of God almighty  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among us and remain with us always.  
**Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Alleluia, alleluia.  
**In the name of Christ. Alleluia, alleluia.**