



TOGETHER

Christ is risen - he is risen indeed, alleluia!

NewarkandSouthwellMethodist.org.uk

Back to normal?

Reflections on the disciples next moves after the empty tomb | Rev Peter Hibberts

In my Easter Day homily, at the live services I was able to attend, I shared my reflections on John 20:1-18 and thought perhaps they'd be helpful for a wider audience in the follow up to Easter Day. In the Homily I focussed on and contrasted the two responses following the discovery of the empty tomb by the men and then the women.

Firstly I love that Mary Magdalene discovered the tomb first. This was a woman, a prostitute, an outcast, one with no honour, no rights, no status. She then reports her findings to the disciples and Peter and, I think, John, return. It is Peter that goes in first despite John out-running him, but after seeing the empty tomb, do you notice what they do next? They see the grave clothes, the absence of Jesus' body and they, it says, return to their homes.

I wonder if we are in danger of this in the wake of Covid-19. We all want a little normality back, and I totally understand that but let's not be too quick, when restrictions lift, to get back to our normal lives. Let's not rush to get back to gathering as we used to in sometimes Victorian style church services that were spiralling in decline. Let's dwell a bit at the death of our old normality, the death of our pre-covid church and try to gather differently and better. Let's perhaps, instead of returning home like the disciples did, do what Mary did.

Mary doesn't turn and leave, she stays and she takes time. She bends over and weeps. She is there, dwelling at the tomb with no pretence, no bravado, no opinion or reason, just raw emotion, raw brokenness. She dwells at the tomb with her heart open wide. And then she looks inside and sees something that the other disciples missed. There, inside the tomb, are two angels, in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. I wonder why Peter and the other disciple don't see them. Perhaps they are in too much of a rush to get back to that normality - to return to their homes.

What happens next goes down in history. In that liminal space of reflection and question Mary looks up and sees a man. "They have taken my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him," she says. 'Where next?' she's asking. Do you see that? 'Where must I go next to find Jesus?' Boom! That's the question that should be on our lips! Not when can we reopen, how do we organise the chairs at a social distance, where should we place the hand sanitiser. We should be asking, 'Where next to find Jesus?'

With that question Jesus beautifully says, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?' (He knows the answer, but I think he wants to know if, in her heart, she really wants to find Jesus.) 'Mary!' he says. And 'Boom!' Her question is answered.

Come with me, folks. Dwell this Easter, on the death and resurrection of Christ and ask that question. 'Where next Lord?' Then look up and see Jesus. Remember that he is the God who flung stars into space, who died and yet is alive! See Him! And then get ready to follow him to wherever he goes next. This is not the time to go back to our lives, this is the time to go on - and that is exactly what Mary does - she goes and announces to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord!' The first post resurrection evangelism!

Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**



1. Online Service

Join us from 10:30am on Sunday for our online Circuit Service which this week led by Revd Peter Hibberts.

Find it on the 'Newark and Southwell Methodist Circuit' YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/NewarkSouthwellMethodistCircuit>)

why not invite a friend to watch it with you and share the link with them on your social media or by email!

2. Circuit 'Zoom' Coffee Time

Join folk from across the circuit from 11:30am each Sunday morning - you provide the coffee - we'll provide the fellowship! pop in for 5 minutes or half an hour - we'd love to see you!

If you'd like help to 'Zoom', please get in touch!

Please join us afterwards

Come with a drink and a biscuit to share in conversation after the service.

www.zoom.us
Meeting ID: 885 3100 7185
Password: Tog3ther

Phone: 0131 460 1196
Meeting ID: 885 3100 7185
Password: 48647472



3. Radio Services

BBC Radio 4 (Also [online](#).)
08:10am - 11th April 2021

Low Sunday

Exploring the rich story of the Road to Emmaus for Low Sunday, with Rev Philip Blackledge and Claire Nicholson of Holy Trinity Scottish Episcopal Church, Melrose.

Readings: Psalm 42; Luke 24: 13-49

4. Radio Nottingham

Listen every Sunday, at 8am, to a live church service on BBC Radio Nottingham. (Online or on 95.1-103.8 MHz FM for free.)

7-4-21

Salvation sealed - power promised

Our Sunday Sermon | Reflections from John 20:19-31 | Revd. Peter Hibberts

One of the great pleasures of lockdown church for me has been leading online (Zoom) study groups. I had regular Monday Evening and Tuesday evening groups throughout the last year with folk from across the circuit (and even including some from outside the circuit) and during lent I've co-lead a further Tuesday afternoon group. These groups have been a real privilege and a pleasure to lead and the feedback received has been wonderful. One person told me that they really felt like they had grown in their faith during the last year and may not have joined a group had it not been on Zoom. It's really been a silver lining to an otherwise, often dark cloud. It seems that whilst our doors have been locked, God has still been able to move amongst us (not that we should be surprised by this.)

A theme that has come up more than once is the person of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is mentioned specifically again in this week's lectionary reading. In John's gospel we appear to have a pre-pentecost giving of the Holy Spirit as Jesus breathes on them and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

There are many things in my faith that I do not fully understand and the Holy Spirit is one of them. In one sense there's no shame in that, to understand the fullness of God is what my grandparents may have described as trying to fit a quart into a pint pot (and my brain often feels like a half-pint pot at that). Why, if the disciples are given the Holy Spirit here, does it appear not to be received? (At least the effect isn't reported as very noticeable.) Why do we hail pentecost as the giving of the Holy Spirit when it appears to happen here, week's earlier? Why does Jesus say that he must leave them so the helper can come (the Holy Spirit) if he gives the spirit to them here, when he is with them? (Indeed these events are only reported in John's gospel and in John 16:7 Jesus even says that 'Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you.' - widely accepted as a reference to the Holy Spirit.) There are some answers to these questions and if you want to know more than I can fit in this space, do get in touch but I share my puzzles to demonstrate that it's okay not to have it all figured out.

I think I possibly understand less, actually, about how the Holy Spirit works. For some the spirit brings in new languages (often called speaking or praying in tongues) the spirit has been known to cause people to faint, to laugh, to cry (I've experienced crying and praying in tongues, personally, though please don't take that as a boast) and many other ways. In my last church I had conversations with a woman who described the powerful ways she felt the spirit move many years ago and how she didn't feel him in the same way now. She was concerned that her love may have grown cold. More recently I've had conversations with folk who cannot obviously pinpoint 'feeling' God's Holy Spirit at any particular occasion (folk often lament not being able to speak or pray in tongues). These folk have felt like they are somehow missing out.

As we approach Pentecost in a few weeks, a real chance to focus on the work of the Holy Spirit, let me unpack a few things from this passage, as I see them to hopefully go some way in deepening our understanding of the third (though not in rank) person of God the Trinity.

Firstly, if Jesus breathes on them and says, 'Receive' I see no reason why they haven't received. These are the disciples that have chosen to follow Jesus following the death and resurrection. They may not know all that being a Christian entails (and neither do *any* of us) but they have chosen to stand on the cross and follow Jesus. These are Christians in all but name. They are now marked with the sign of the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 1:13 this is referred to as a 'seal' placed on those who have

'believed'. There are no Christians that have not been sealed by the Holy Spirit. This is the comforter, the counsellor and the advocate - the last of which is place of the holy spirit in vouching for us and assuring our salvation. Of all the folk, I can't (nor should) judge whether you have 'believed' and therefore have been sealed with the Holy Spirit but I believe you can be and can know that you are (we are told in the end of the resurrection account to stop doubting and believe - we mustn't live our faith wondering if we are really Christian - instead we should get on with the journey that is faith!) If you are unsure though, I'd love to pray with you. **If you believe then the Holy Spirit is with you. John 14:16 says, "You know him, because he abides in you, and he will be in you."**

Secondly, nowhere does the Bible say that all will receive any of the spiritual gifts (such as speaking in tongues). It actually says, 'He gifts to each person, just as he decides.' (1 Corinthians 12:11). What is actually given to all of them at this point in John's gospel is Peace and Purpose.

Peace? My goodness, they needed peace right now! Locked away, in fear, confused, possibly seeing a ghost...Jesus gives them what they need most! What do you need most from the Holy Spirit right now? Open your hands and use the beautifully simple prayer, 'Come Holy Spirit' and trust that God will supply all your needs.

Purpose? They also needed this! Whatever were they supposed to do next? There was no book of canon law to guide the church, no Constitutional Practices and Disciplines, there wasn't even a Bible as we know it! Jesus beautifully sends them out to do what is now possible as a direct result of the wounds which he shows so graciously to Thomas - to preach forgiveness; and following the appearance to Thomas, to foster faith and belief even in those who have not seen!

So what do we look forward to at Pentecost? Well, I've heard what we see at Pentecost (and I don't want to say too much now as that's a whole other sermon) described in lots of different ways. I've heard it being *baptised* in the Holy Spirit (like it's a total immersion rather than a sign on the forehead); I've heard it described as a *pouring out* of the Holy Spirit (like what is prophesied in Joel); I've heard it described as a *filling* with the Holy Spirit (what Acts calls it - as those they were not, in John, filled - there is certainly a different experience in being filled!) I'm not sure what to call it as it seems like another level and it's one I want to see more of in my life and in the church. Perhaps the most helpful phrase I've heard used was one used by Samuel Chadwick (the then Principal of Cliff College) at the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. He refers to the *filling* of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and our need for *filling* as a 'second gift' sometimes described as the 'second blessing'. This works for me, in my own understanding and in my experience as well as (more importantly) seeming to ring true with scripture. Chadwick talks about this experience in John as 'receiving the gift of the Spirit for salvation' but talks also of a need for the 'infilling presence' and 'overflowing power' which is what the disciples experience at Pentecost.

I know that God is present for all of us, by God's spirit. I pray that you will know the peace that God alone can bring and that you will know that you are sealed with God's Holy Spirit for your salvation.

I also know that there is more in store for me, more in store for you, more in store for our church. I am also praying for a powerful *infilling* and *overflowing* in our lives, in our Church, and in our communities, for God's glory. **Amen.**

Prayer Space

Gracious God,

As some are able to gather again in our churches and some still find ourselves in isolation, come by the power of your Holy Spirit and unite us all with you.

May we continue to find ways to step into your presence, turn our eyes towards you and know you with us, wherever we are.

As we journey from your resurrection into changed and transformed lives, may we know you with us on our journey.

As we encounter difficulties and hardship, may we find ways to lean into you and be strengthened, refreshed and healed by you.

As we look around, may we notice those who need our help and support, a phone call, an email, a letter, a chance to physically walk with them and to pray for them.

Bind us together, Lord, with cords that cannot be broken.

For your glory Father, in the name of Jesus and in the Power of your Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Heavenly Father,

We abound in hope by the power of Your Holy Spirit. Fill us with all joy and peace as we believe in You. Holy Spirit, empower our lives to produce Your fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Lead us into new beginnings and give us the courage to move forward as you church.

Your kingdom come on Earth as it is in heaven.

Amen

EMAIL PRAYER CHAIN

If you would like to join a prayer chain and receive prayer requests or to submit a prayer request (with permission of the recipient) please get in touch with Colin...

Colin Beckett colin1244@gmail.com.

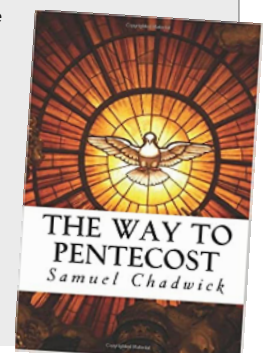
It is for those of any church or none!

The Way to Pentecost

Samuel Chadwick was a Methodist Minister and the Principal of Cliff College (The Christian theological college in Calver, Derbyshire) between 1912 and 1932.

Frustrated with the lack of power in his preaching, it is said that, "he got out his pile of precious sermons and threw them on the fire! The result was immediate - he was baptised with the Holy Spirit and with fire. (Luke 3:16)"

First published in 1932, 'The Way to Pentecost' is a wonderful book for anyone who wants to know and understand more of God's Holy Spirit and how He can transform our lives and our church if we receive him in all his fulness.



Reflective songs...

Songs chosen for inclusion in the YouTube service...

See what a morning (StF 309) [LINK](#)

Breath on me breath of God (StF 370) [LINK](#)

Down the mountain the river flows (StF 377) [LINK](#)

Click [LINK's](#) to access YouTube clips of each song.

Bubble Church Resources



As things become safer, many of our Bubbles will be reopening. Would you like to be part of Covid-Safe face-to-face church? Join a bubble today by getting in touch with your minister.

The following questions are designed to get you thinking and, if you're involved in Bubble Church talking about the topic!

1. What is your experience of the Holy Spirit?
2. How would you describe the Holy Spirit to a non-believer?
3. How you ever witnessed movements of the Holy Spirit second hand (seeing things happen in a church service or meeting)? Hope did you feel? Did you speak with the folk involved afterwards?
4. Do you feel like you are sealed or filled with the Holy Spirit?
5. Have you ever prayed to be filled with the Holy Spirit? What happened?
6. What goest would you like to receive from God and How would you like God to transform our church?

For more information checkout the Bubble Church guide with risk assessment on the Circuit Website: <https://www.newarkandsouthwellmethodist.org.uk/newsroom/bubble-church.html>

Thy Kingdom Come

Ascension and Pentecost are on the horizon and so the 'Thy Kingdom Come' initiative. TKC is a call to prayer that this year will happen from 13th - 23rd May. There are many opportunities to get involved in TKC as a church and as an individual. One central way is to follow the [Prayer Journal](#) which you can access online at thykingdomcome.global. If you would like a paper copy they are also available. There is also a wonderful [Novena](#) which prays daily through the Psalms and encourages us to pray for 11 people specially during TKC. Get in touch for more details and watch this space for more TKC activities.



Families: by Katie Hibberts
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FAMILY ACTIVITIES

A question for adults to ask children: What were the disciples doing when Jesus came to visit them?

The disciples were scared, they thought they might be arrested or even killed for being friends of Jesus. They had locked themselves in together to hide. Jesus didn't need the doors to be open, he appeared among them. The disciples were filled with joy and excitement when they saw Jesus alive. The wounds in his hands feet and side showed that it really was the same Jesus who they had seen die on the cross – he had risen from the dead!

A question for children to ask adults: Can you think of a time in your life when you were scared? What did you do to help yourself be brave?

Active Prayer:

You will need: Paper, pens Jesus showed his hands to the disciples with the wounds from the nails in them. . It was only when Thomas saw the wounds that he really believed Jesus was alive.

On a piece of paper or card draw round the hands of each person in your household – colour and decorate them to represent the people in your family.

Once you have finished your design use it as a prayer focus point, you can place a hand onto each of the hand prints and pray for the person who it represents.

Activity:

Can you decode the message to work out what Jesus said to his disciples?

Maybe you could make your own secret codes and share Bible Passages with your friends and family to decode.



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a (flower) b (sun) c (candle)
e (glasses) h (star) i (pencil)
o (flag) p (flower) u (clock)
w (snowflake) t (bell) y (heart)

TOGETHER contributions needed!

As Nathan goes on his sabbatical in the next few months, we need your input into TOGETHER more than ever. Could you write a front page article (around 500 words) for one of our editions? Perhaps you could contribute a prayer, an encouraging or even a challenging piece. Maybe you would be willing to be part of the editorial team? Perhaps you'd like us to advertise something in your church or across the circuit.

If you would like to join the team or make a one-off contribution, please get in touch with Revd. Peter Hibberts by email (peter.hibberts@methodist.org.uk) or telephone (01636812166).