

Prelude Op101 No 1 – Charles Villers Stanford

(4:07) Thoughts for the first Sunday after Easter also known as the second Sunday of Easter

The lectionary readings from the Authorized version of the bible are those specified in the Common Worship lectionary and the Collect is from the Book of Common Prayer

The Collect

Almighty Father, who hast given thine only Son to die for our sins, and to rise again for our justification: Grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness, that we may always serve thee in pureness of living and truth; through the merits of the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(4:49) Psalm 16

- 1 Preserve me, O God;
for in thee have I put my trust.
- 2 O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord;
Thou art my God, my goods are nothing unto thee.
- 3 All my delight is upon the saints, that are in the earth;
and upon such as excel in virtue.
- 4 But they that run after another god;
shall have great trouble.
- 5 Their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer;
neither make mention of their names within my lips.
- 6 The Lord himself is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup;
thou shalt maintain my lot.
- 7 The lot is fallen unto me in a fair ground;
yea, I have a goodly heritage.
- 8 I will thank the Lord for giving me warning;
my reins also chasten me in the night-season.
- 9 I have set God always before me;
for he is on my right hand, therefore I shall not fall.
- 10 Wherefore my heart was glad, and my glory rejoiced;
my flesh also shall rest in hope.

- 11 For why? thou shalt not leave my soul in hell;
neither shalt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption.
- 12 Thou shalt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is the fulness of joy;
and at thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore.

(6:20) The old testament reading is drawn from the book of Exodus chapter 14 verses 10 – 31 and chapter 15 verses 20 and 21

- 10 As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked back, and there were the Egyptians advancing on them. In great fear the Israelites cried out to the Lord.
- 11 They said to Moses, ‘Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt?’
- 12 Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, “Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians”? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.’
- 13 But Moses said to the people, ‘Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again.
- 14 The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still.’
- 15 Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to go forward.
- 16 But you lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the Israelites may go into the sea on dry ground.
- 17 Then I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and so I will gain glory for myself over Pharaoh and all his army, his chariots, and his chariot drivers.
- 18 And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gained glory for myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his chariot drivers.’
- 19 The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them.
- 20 It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.
- 21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided.

- 22 The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.
- 23 The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers.
- 24 At the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic.
- 25 He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, 'Let us flee from the Israelites, for the Lord is fighting for them against Egypt.'
- 26 Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers.'
- 27 So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea.
- 28 The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained.
- 29 But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.
- 30 Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.
- 31 Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

The Song of Miriam

- 20 Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing.
- 21 And Miriam sang to them:
'Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously;
horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.'

(10:43) The epistle is written in the second chapter of the Acts of the apostles verse 14 and verses 22-32

Peter Addresses the Crowd

- 14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: ‘Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.
- 22 ‘You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know—
- 23 this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law.
- 24 But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power.
- 25 For David says concerning him,
“I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken;
- 26 therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
moreover, my flesh will live in hope.
- 27 For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
or let your Holy One experience corruption.
- 28 You have made known to me the ways of life;
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.”
- 29 ‘Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.
- 30 Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne.
- 31 Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying,
“He was not abandoned to Hades,
nor did his flesh experience corruption.”
- 32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.

(12:48) A Reading from the first letter of Peter, chapter 1 verses 3-9:

- 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
- 4 and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,
- 5 who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
- 6 In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials,
- 7 so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.
- 8 Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy,
- 9 for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

(13:59) The Gospel reading is from the twentieth chapter of the Gospel of St John, verses 19-31

- 19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'
- 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.
- 21 Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.'
- 22 When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'
- 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'
- 24 But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.
- 25 So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

- 26 A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'
- 27 Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.'
- 28 Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!'
- 29 Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'
- 30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book.
- 31 But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

(16:07) Some thoughts...

This Eastertide is an opportunity to refresh our hope in the risen Jesus Christ at a time when the world, as we have known it, is being severely shaken. And the reading from 1 Peter 1 offers us some much needed encouragement.

Peter writes: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

None of us feel like praising God in times of trouble. To some it might look like hiding one's head in the sand. But if we believe that God is our refuge, then praising him is an important way of acknowledging that reality. Those of you who are familiar with BCP Matins will know that the Te Deum begins, "We praise thee, O God: we acknowledge thee to be the Lord."

In praising God we are acknowledging and recognising both who he is and what he has done for us. Thus in particular: "In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Hope of some kind keeps people going. But Peter bids us praise God because he has given us 'a living hope' - a striking phrase reminding us that our Christian hope is much more than the expectation of life beyond death. It is hope in a person, Jesus Christ. We can be sure of his love for us because not only did he die for us but he also was raised from the grave. He is alive and promised to be present with his followers in every circumstance. (Matthew 28:20).

Atheists, who imagine that we are foolish in believing in things which fly in the face of science, have missed the point. Our faith is in a real person and is based on the testimony of credible witnesses, such as Peter. In commending Jesus to the people of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, Peter told them, "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we all are witnesses of the fact." (Acts 2:32).

We have also been brought “into an inheritance which can never perish, spoil or fade...”. Something we will share with Christ in the fullness of his coming kingdom. Remember Jesus once said to his followers, “Fear not little flock, it is your Fathers pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

“In this you greatly rejoice”, Peter continues (v 6), “though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all sorts of trials.” We are invited to rejoice, not for the grief and pain coronavirus is causing, but because we have this living hope. Rejoicing in Jesus’ resurrection strengthens this hope in us and counters the hopelessness of the daily news bulletins.

God allows difficulties to test our faith, as the story of Job shows. Thus Peter says that difficulties “have come so that your faith - of greater worth than gold ... - may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus is revealed.” (v 7) It may come as a surprise to think of our faith, which is often weak, is of value to God and something to be guarded and nurtured. It makes sense that, as something of value, it should be tested, both to prove it genuine and to strengthen and bring it to maturity. Gardeners know that seedlings need to be exposed to the weather to harden off. So let us persevere in faith for we are “receiving the goal of our faith the salvation of our souls.” (v 9)

The story of Thomas in John 20 carries a similar message. His doubts were resolved when he too saw the risen Jesus. He did not need to touch his scars, seeing the living Jesus was enough for him to acknowledge him as, “My Lord and my God.” Let us take to hearts Jesus’ word to Thomas: “Stop doubting and believe. Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

We may all be facing a somewhat bleak outlook in the summer, so as you read these thoughts now, may that blessing, that Jesus offers, be yours. May we all so refresh our faith and belief in Jesus as our living hope, that we have something positive to offer those who may be seeking hope and encouragement once the present restrictions on meeting are eased.

(20:48) Concluding Voluntary – A R Gaul