

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 20 April 2025 - Easter Day

Lectionary Readings (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Acts 10.34-43 or Isaiah 65.17-end; Psalm 118.1-2, 14-24 [or 118.14-24]; 1 Corinthians 15.19-26 or Acts 10.34-43; John 20.1-18 or Luke 24.1-12 ****Acts must be read****

Homily

Today's homily has been written by Amanda Tuck, LLM in the Orwell Group Benefice

Acts 10- 34-43

Easter-God's Loving Commitment to all Humanity—He is lord of All (Acts 10:v 36)

Have you ever watched children when they are playing parachute games?

Let me explain. This parachute idea does **not** involve young ones hurling themselves out of planes, (although that might later be the thrill of a lifetime!)

No, this sort of parachute game takes place firmly grounded, with people of all ages holding onto the edge of a colourful circle of light material and having fun with it. They move around in circles taking their colourful section with them, maybe flipping balls on the surface of it, raising it, lifting the fabric high and charging about beneath it. Shrieks are heard. It is a lot of fun.

What has **this** to do with Easter, you may ask?

It would be possible to draw all sorts of analogies. A parachute could model ideas of fun, festival, energy, colour in ever-changing seasons, and so on. You might think of others.

Today, however, on Easter day, you are invited to visualise in a parachute the idea of **world mission**. To explore the connectedness which Christians feel while living separately in many different countries and cultures. Connectedness felt through the risen Christ on this joyful Easter Day.

The parachute itself forms a circle of bright colour, movement and light. Material segments move individually, but remain joined. Vibrant colours are separate but bound tightly together. Creating a circle of life.

It's only bits of colourful fabric sewn together, of course, yet the whole gives joy in glorious movement, celebrating its multi-faceted nature.

Easter, our high point of the year, marks Jesus's Resurrection and Salvation of God's entire colourful and connected world.

This is something Peter, (that fisherman Peter, Saint Peter), the founder of our church, (that ordinary everyday bloke turned extraordinary by Jesus,) starts to understand in today's Gospel reading from Acts 10.

Peter, (interestingly some time before Paul's conversion), tells the story of Jesus, but as he does so he starts to GET, to broadcast Jesus's inclusive and far-reaching message.

The central idea, the hub of the matter, Peter starts to understand, is that whatever our colour, creed, culture, God loves us all.

Peter engages in what we would now call, mission, outreach, and inclusion.

I wonder what those important Christian ideas might mean to you.

(Pause)

Peter, while still in Jerusalem, (the traditional dwelling place of God among his people in Judaism), makes a loving commitment to spread Christianity to all humanity.

This marks a change in his personal perspective. It alters his attitude to Gentiles, to the Early church, and above all it changes Peter's view of what he is about as a disciple.

Everyone everywhere, Peter realises, is loved by God. Peter must take that love and spread it widely amongst all. That is mission. But a special mission including those whose customs are not familiar.

That is some commitment.

Peter in Acts today recounts first-hand the central message of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

Peter tells of the Easter-morning empty tomb. His own post- resurrection witness of Jesus's appearances to the disciples after death. That makes this truly amazing.

Peter emphasises God's impartiality. He loves us all.

(Pause)

God, unlike so many of us, does not take sides. He loves like a parent.

I wonder how hard that might be for us?

Jesus, God's son who lived on earth, died and rose again for **all** of us. Not just a few.

He died for the **in** crowd and the **out** crowd alike. No favourites.

Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor.

He died and rose again for us, **every single one of us**. Even people on the margins. Anyone and everyone who ever needed him.

The Holy Spirit was active in Peter, that ordinary bloke, as he told of Jesus and bore personal witness. The Spirit moved in those who heard him talk. They really heard Peter's message.

(Pause)

God, unlike us, doesn't have favourites. He does not care for magazine looks or sharp intellect.

None of God's emotional attachment is centred on money or on political power.

God does not follow people on Facebook or notice the latest media trends.

He doesn't even support a football team!

(Pause)

No, what God has created for us in our fragile and troubled world is **all** good. Despite our faults, (which are many), we are all undeniably loveable.

We must simply all **love one another as well as we can**. Love reaching out, overflowing from the centre of ourselves. Love showing no favouritism.

Love, like a sewn bond strongly connecting people to others. Love, holding us together but encompassing colourful segments, like those of a parachute, spilling to the very edge. Or like the Easter Egg pushing from the hollow centre to the very edge of deliciousness.

No closed off silos or warring factions can survive when flooded by love.

So, we should celebrate and spread that love, inspired by the spirit, and care for each other.

Peter, the Rock has **only just** come to realize the size and scope of God's embrace of **all** peoples in Acts 10—He glimpses the possibilities in the enormous all-encompassing world-sized parachute of love, if you like.

It has become clear to Peter, (the one who never quite got the message before Jesus died), what he, they, must do- Spread the gospel to all, Jews and gentiles, **even to the much-hated Romans if they are prepared to hear**.

Peter shows the zeal of the true convert in Acts. He is now, (perhaps astonishingly), open to including the enemy, Cornelius, a Roman soldier.

He of the occupying army – Cornelius, a Gentile, certainly **not one of us**.

He was also worthy to be loved deeply. Cornelius and his family opened their hearts. They were a valued part of humanity, and God loved them too.

That is a huge intellectual and emotional leap for an observant Jew like Peter. An enormous step of personal faith to understand the implications of an inclusive loving God, isn't it?

Peter now sees that Jesus died and rose again for those outside the sheepfold too.

Everything has now shifted- changed permanently and radically because of it. **Jesus died for everyone**.

The resurrection, Peter tells Cornelius and others, contains pivotal new realities that God has revealed. Pivots turn Peter's world view around to face a new and different direction.

This powerful message of inclusion and mission changes people who are open enough to hear it.

Some may mock, of course, (as they did in the early church), but others find themselves gripping to one small edge of the enormous parachute of overarching belief.

We are here today because at Easter we too are gripped by the power of the message that Jesus died and rose again for the whole world.

It is all part of God's colourful global plan which, like that parachute in our hands perpetually moves and changes- It's never still, any more than we are.

There are no insurmountable barriers between us as Christians in a colourful and varied humanity.

We are **all** welcome to join and live richly.

As it says in Acts 10:34-**God shows no favouritism**, after all. **Amen**

Ways to Engage all Generations

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what your favourite part of the story/passage is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder who your favourite character is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder how _____ felt or I wonder how _____ felt when _____ happened?
- I wonder how you feel about _____?
- I wonder where you are in this story?
- I wonder what part of the story is about you?
- I wonder what the [tree, pearl, coin] could really be?
- I wonder why _____ said _____?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?

Suggested intercessions

Father God, you have shown us by your son's death and resurrection that you love everyone. There is no one in this whole wide beautiful world that you do not love.

We thank you that, even with our faults, you love us all so much.

We thank you on this day and in this place that you have brought us here together to celebrate Easter together. Thank you for loving us.

Lord, in your Mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We thank you, Father God, for our Christian Church as it is. We thank you that it is active and missional in the whole world. We are proud to include fellow Christians. To be enriched by people of all languages, cultures and varying beliefs. We know that in some parts of the world it is not easy to profess Christian faith.

Thank you, also for all those who quietly work to help and support our local worship in this place. Those who understand the importance of community and who show friendship and love to others; even those who come amongst us as strangers.

Lord, in your Mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We thank you, God, that you are always our constant and loyal friend. We thank you that you are there for us when things are tough, and when we feel alone, isolated, worried, upset or sad.

Be with us, Lord, and with all those who need your love at this time. Help us to bring comfort to those who are ill, those who are feeling alone, those enduring broken relationships. Be close to those who are economically vulnerable and feel no-one cares.

Lord, in your Mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We think for a moment, Lord, about all those people we have known who are no longer with us. Those who have died and those we are parted from. We thank you for their work and worship. We thank you for their love, and for all that they have given us.

We know that in loving people there is sometimes disagreement and even occasional conflict. Help us to cherish our differences, learn how to love even in difficult circumstances, and to appreciate that we are all unique with our own gifts.

Lord, in your Mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We thank you, God, for the beautiful world which you have created. We love the countryside, the Fens, the cityscape, the big skies and the streams. Spring flowers here decorating Church today give us joy. Each flower is created as a sign of your love and

power. Beauty fills us with hope and joy. Help us to care for your creation, mindful of your creatures. Teach us to show we value them in all the ways you would wish.

Merciful Father,

Accept these Prayers for the sake of your Son, Our Risen Saviour, Jesus Christ,

Amen

Suggested hymns/songs

- Jesus Stand among us in thy risen power.
- Thine be the Glory
- From the very depth of Darkness
- A brighter Dawn is breaking
- Christ is made the sure foundation
- All in an Easter Garden
- Shout for joy and sing
- This is the Day

Activities to accompany the service

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.com/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@lectionary resource)

Parachute games are a real idea for this, if you can find one to borrow. Many preschools have them, many clubs and they are fun.

If not maybe a photocopy of a divided circle parachute with ideas in each coloured part about how the person might spread the love to others- Even those they do not know- Gentiles (!)



Or make something like this, using hand-prints in paint- if people are not in their Easter Best!

The Refelctionary (as detailed above) has a great idea for Easter with what it calls a “foldable”. There is a link to download a template...