

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 27 April 2025 - The Second Sunday of Easter

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)

Exodus 14.10-end; 15.20-21]; Acts 5.27-32; Psalm 118.14-end or Psalm 150; Revelation 1.4-8; John 20.19-end ****Acts must be read****

Homily

Today's homily has been written by the Revd Michael Wilcockson, Assistant Curate - Associate Priest, Linton (Benefice) and Rural Dean of Granta

We often talk of the Easter story or Jesus' resurrection story and like all good stories it has its twists and turns and unexpected moments. For the first Christians the Easter story was all the more vivid because it was at the same time a retelling of another story, the story of the Passover. Even today in the Jewish Passover service at home everyone follows the ceremony from a *Haggadah* book – haggadah means literally a 'story', the story of Moses and Pharaoh, the ten plagues, the baking of unleavened bread and finally the escape through the Red Sea to the Promised Land.

The importance of these stories is that they help give our imagination shape, meaning and purpose. We retell them every year, we discuss them and focus on different details, we reflect on their meaning but most importantly we know as Christians that without these stories our lives might lose something of their significance.

Psychoanalysts know the power of stories. They know also that the stories we tell of ourselves are not necessarily the true ones and when a person's life appears to have gone badly wrong, when they become self-destructive, depressed, confused or unable to cope it is often that there is an underlying hidden narrative which is dictating their behaviour. That is certainly one conclusion which Stephen Grosz makes in his excellent little book, *The Examined Life* (2013).

Let me relate to you the story of Peter which Stephen Grosz uses in the first chapter called, 'How we can be possessed by a story that cannot be told'. There is a spoiler alert that comes with this. There is a shock in the story, but everything is not as it seems at first and there is a good ending, which is the point of telling the story.

Stephen Grosz the psychoanalyst first met Peter when the 27-year-old had been sent to him after he had tried to kill himself. The sessions developed quite well and Dr Grosz learnt that one of Peter's characteristics was that as soon as something was going well, he would deliberately sabotage it: he would pick a fight at work and then leave; he would make friends and lose them by arguing with them; he ended his sessions with Dr Grosz by mocking his ability as a psychoanalyst.

A few months after their sessions had ended, Dr Grosz received a letter from Peter's fiancée saying that Peter had killed himself but before this sad event he had frequently said how grateful he had been for the doctor's help. Then, six months later a very strange thing happened; on Dr Grosz's answer machine Peter had left a message saying 'It's me. I'm not dead. I was wondering if I could come and talk to you. I'm at my old number.' After he had recovered from his surprise and shock, Dr Grosz contacted Peter and they resumed their sessions. It turned out that it was Peter who had sent the letter about his death, not his fiancée. Once again he had sabotaged his therapy just as it was getting close and going well.

This time the true reason for his behaviour emerged. Peter liked to shock people because he was frightened of being dependent on any one and this appeared to go back to his very early childhood when his parents had divorced, and they had taken out their frustrations on him. The inner story which controlled Peter was that any of his feelings of weakness must be destroyed through acts of violence and destruction.

Fortunately, there is a happy ending to the Peter story. After two years of therapy, they agreed to stop even though Dr Grosz felt there was more work to be done and then by chance they met at a cinema. Peter shook him warmly by the hand and then introduced him to his wife.

I have related this story in detail because as Stephen Grosz concludes, 'I believe that all of us try to make sense of our lives by telling our stories, but Peter was possessed by a story that he couldn't tell. Not having the words, he expressed himself by other means.'

For the very early Christians the trauma of Jesus' death could so easily have destroyed them. But they already had the Passover story with which to make sense of Jesus' death and resurrection. Very quickly the Easter narrative absorbed the Passover ideas that hope and peace would replace suffering. Listen to these words from the opening of the Book of Revelation:

'To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.' (Revelation 1:6)

In the Passover story it is the blood of the lamb spread over the lintels of the Israelites' doors which spares them from the angel of death and allows them to be freed from slavery in Egypt and enter the kingdom of peace. Peace, grace, glory and freedom are words used by every New Testament writer to describe this new inward and outward state. Remember how the risen Jesus says to the disciples *three times* in John's Gospel when they were meeting behind locked doors, 'Peace be with you' (John 20:19).

The Easter story is about newness and fresh starts. When the young man Peter was able to understand the old hidden destructive story about himself, he replaced it with a new forgiving one. This lies at the heart of the Easter story. The risen Jesus says to the disciples that they are to forgive each other's sins; the collect for today even uses Passover language when it tells us to 'put away the leaven of malice and wickedness' – because at every Passover leaven or yeast has to be removed from the home in memory of the first Passover when there was no time to bake bread with yeast (leaven).

So, we pray, that as we attempt to live the Easter story, that we might put away all destructive thoughts and behaviour, not only in our relationship with others but more especially in our understanding and treatment of ourselves so that, in the words of today's collect, 'we may always serve you in pureness of living and truth'.

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 of the resurrected Jesus meeting his disciples is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder how Thomas felt when Jesus told him to put his finger on Jesus' hands and side and feel the marks of the crucifixion?
- I wonder what story Thomas might have told his friends about meeting the risen Jesus?
- I wonder where you are in this story?
- I wonder what part of the story is about you?
- I wonder why Jesus says 'Peace be with you' so often in this story?
- I wonder what other signs Jesus did after this?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?

Suggested intercessions

The Collect for the Second Sunday of Easter

Almighty Father,
you have given your 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 you
in pureness of living and truth;
through the merits of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Additional collect

Risen Christ,
for whom no door is locked, no entrance barred:
open the doors of our hearts,

that we may seek the good of others
and walk the joyful road of sacrifice and peace,
to the praise of God the Father.

A prayer for the Easter season

Christ our life,
you are alive
 in the beauty of the earth
 in the rhythm of the seasons
 in the mystery of time and space
Alleluia

Christ our life,
you are alive
 in the tenderness of touch
 in the heartbeat of intimacy
 in the insights of solitude
Alleluia

Christ our life,
you are alive
 in the creative possibility
 of the dullest conversation
 the dreariest task
 the most threatening event
Alleluia

Christ our life,
you are alive
 to offer re-creation
 to every unhealed hurt
 to every deadened place
 to every damaged heart
Alleluia

You set before us a great choice.
Therefore we choose life.
The dance of resurrection soars and surges
 through the whole creation.
It sets gifts of bread and wine upon our table.
This is grace, dying we live.
So let us live.

Kathy Galloway (Iona Community) from The SPCK Book of Christian Prayer p.403

- Pray for those who are suffering from anxiety, mental health issues, destructive thoughts and behaviour. We ask for the comfort and healing power of the Holy Spirit to lead those who suffer to find in the Easter story the means of hope and new life. We pray especially for ... [add names]
- Jesus said, 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid' (John 14:27). We pray for the peace of the world especially in places of conflict and war ... [add names]

- We pray for ourselves to ‘put away the leaven of malice and wickedness’ and to be kinder, more generous and honest to ourselves as well as to others.

Suggested hymns/songs

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

Breathe on me, Breath of Go

O Sons and Daughters of the King

I Love to Tell the Story

Rejoice, the Lord is King

Praise Ye the Lord

This is the Day the Lord Hath Made

Lo He Comes with Clouds Descending

Dona Nobis Pacem

There’s Spirit of Love in This Place

Surely the Presence of the Lord

I’m So Glad Jesus Lifted Me

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)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=029_uuKYBI&t=24s Very short Passover story for children, raises interesting question about why the Passover story is related every year. (4 minutes)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F8o4TrIA76U&t=50s> Short film - Thomas meets the risen Jesus (2 ½ minutes)