

# Parish of St. Thomas, Apostle & Martyr, Ipswich

18th April 2021 - Easter 3

## Collect:

Risen Christ, you filled your disciples with boldness and fresh hope: strengthen us to proclaim your risen life and fill us with your peace, to the glory of God the Father.

**Amen.**

## Psalm 4

1 Answer me when I call, O God of my right! You gave me room when I was in distress. Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer.

2 How long, you people, shall my honour suffer shame? How long will you love vain words, and seek after lies?

3 But know that the Lord has set apart the faithful for himself; the Lord hears when I call to him.

4 When you are disturbed, do not sin; ponder it on your beds, and be silent.

5 Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord.



6 There are many who say, "O that we might see some good! Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord!"

7 You have put gladness in my heart more than when their grain and wine abound.

8 I will both lie down and sleep in peace; for you alone, O Lord, make me lie down in safety.

## A reading from the second book of Kings (2.23-25)

He went up from there to Bethel; and while he was going up on the way, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him, saying, "Go away, baldhead! Go away, baldhead!" When he turned around and saw them, he cursed them in the name of the Lord. Then two she-bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys. From there he went on to Mount Carmel, and then returned to Samaria.

**This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.**

## Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke (2.41-52)

Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travellers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour.

**This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, o Christ.**

**Reflection: Are young people a problem or are they a gift?**

Do we see young people as a problem or a gift? In our society I think we are sometimes tempted towards the former more than the latter. Young people, we are told, aren't respecting social distancing measures. They're out of control. They leave rubbish everywhere. They don't show any respect. It wasn't like this in our day... But was it? Haven't young people always been viewed as a problem?

In our bible readings from today we have two contrasting stories of young people. Firstly, our old testament reading has Elisha being verbally abused and chased out of town. "Baldy! Baldy!" they shout at him! This is a picture of an unruly, disrespectful gang of youths. You can probably imagine the modern-day equivalent in Ipswich. A gang of teenagers, maybe on bikes doing wheelies, intimidating any other residents who dare enter their territory! Elisha's response is both a bit shocking and, I think, a little funny. He curses them and two bears come out of the woods and maul forty-two of the boys to death. Perhaps this is one of the passages in the bible that is not to be imitated... it wouldn't make a good youth work strategy!

I think this story probably represents one of our societies unvoiced desires. We just want young people to go away and stop being a problem. We don't want to deal with them very much. Teenagers can be difficult – they can be sarcastic, ungrateful, loud, lacking in empathy and a host of other things. But having been a youth worker for 10 years, I can tell you the joys of working with young people far outweigh the negatives. And most of the negatives can be explained away by remembering that their brains aren't fully developed yet.

I think young people are a gift to us and the Gospel story points to that. But even in this story, the 12 year old Jesus causes his parents anxiety by running off. If even Jesus was a challenge as a teenager we should probably accept all teenagers will be to some extent. Jesus runs off to the temple seeking out wise men. There is some significance to Jesus' age at this point. In Jewish culture, this would be just before his Bar-mitzvah. This would be a time when the older men would start to initiate him into the ways of being a man. But in reversal of the expected outcome, Jesus is actually the gift to these older men. They are astonished by what he teaches them. What might these two stories have to say to us then about how we relate to young people? To expand on that – I am going to tell you another story.

This is a story from a southern African nature reserve about a group of young bull elephants. The park keepers have a big problem on their hands because these elephants are causing all sorts of problems! They keep charging at cars, scaring off tourists and generally leaving a trail of destruction behind them. They have become much too aggressive and overconfident and are now dominating the roads which are usually reserved for tourists. In short, these adolescent male elephants have become a big problem. The solution to this problem was surprisingly simple but first they had to diagnose the problem. What was it that was causing these animals to act in this way? A way which is quite uncharacteristic for elephants. What the park keepers discovered was that all of the older elephants had died off. There were no older male elephants to model what it looked like to be a responsible elephant. So what they did was flew in a couple of older male elephants to the nature reserve, and guess what happened... within a matter of days these young bull elephants started to come into line. All it took was the presence of a few older elephants and they knew how they had to behave.

I wonder if this story can be a metaphor and guide for how we seek to relate with young people. I'm convinced one of the most important things young people need in their lives is an older guide to teach them the ways of life. I'm also convinced that it is one of the things lacking in the lives of many, many young people today. Someone who can guide them in a way that Google, Instagram, and Tik Tok can't. Someone who can teach them how to deal with their pain and anger, how to express love and emotion, someone to guide them through the joys and struggles of life. I long to see churches stepping into this role afresh in the wake of covid. We need to do it safely and appropriately – thinking through safeguarding protocols and ensuring that young people are voluntarily engaging rather than being co-opted. But I think people in churches have this opportunity and I am really excited that St Thomas' are thinking of creative ways of engaging with young people in the future.

I wonder if you can reflect back on when you were a young person. Can you remember when you were 14? What was that like? What were your hopes and dreams? What were your fears and insecurities? And who was it that acted as an older guide in your life? Who showed you the ways of life?

I will leave you with a final question: do you or could you see yourself as a guide to young people? If you can be a guide to a young person in some small way, you may also discover that they are a gift to you.

- Andy Jefferson (Youth Worker with Inspiring Ipswich)

*The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then were they glad when they saw the Lord. Alleluia.*

**The peace of the Lord be always with you.**

Now the green blade riseth,  
from the buried grain,  
Wheat that in dark earth  
many days has lain;  
Love lives again,  
that with the dead has been:  
Love is come again  
like wheat that springeth green.

In the grave they laid Him,  
Love who had been slain,  
Thinking that He never would awake again,  
Laid in the earth like grain  
that sleeps unseen:  
Love is come again  
like wheat that springeth green.

Forth He came at Easter,  
like the risen grain,  
Jesus who for three days  
in the grave had lain;  
Quick from the dead the risen One is seen:  
Love is come again  
like wheat that springeth green.

When our hearts are wintry,  
grieving, or in pain,  
Jesus' touch can call us back to life again,  
Fields of our hearts  
that dead and bare have been:  
Love is come again  
like wheat that springeth green.

***Scriptures for our new priest:***

We are hoping for a priest who can aspire to Philippians 2, and offer joy and humility in serving the Lord at St Thomas. To lift up holy hands in prayer (1 Timothy 2: 8) - and to keep hold of the deep truths of the faith (1 Timothy 3:9).

**A prayer for Easter**

Your love,  
which breathed this world into being,  
established a covenant people,  
brought them out of captivity  
and into a promised land.  
Hallelujah!  
Your love,  
which from the moment of our birth  
has known and called us by name  
from out of this world's slavery  
into the kingdom of God.  
Hallelujah!  
Your love,  
poured into the heart of Jesus  
who endured the nails of our sin,  
defeated death to rise again  
and causes our hearts to sing  
Hallelujah!

***Please pray for:***

**Those with chronic or long-term illness:** Rosemary, Eric Dickerson, Jenny, Andrew Barfield, Kathy Steele, Andrew, Peggy, Margaret Christian, Natacha, Rex & Jill, Christine, Stephen, Samantha

**Those undergoing treatment or currently ill:** Katie, Gloria Elmer, Leslie Bloomfield, Roger Dickerson, Vicky & Matt, Dagmar, Roy, Kenneth Leek, Angela

**All who are affected by the Coronavirus:** *For all who have lost their jobs; all who are despairing and living with loss or anxiety. For hospital and health care workers.*

**Those who have recently died, and their families mourning their loss:** Sally Carson, Jean Dominy, Prince Philip. RIP

***Prayer for our new Priest-in-Charge:***

Lord, give us all wisdom and guidance as the search process goes ahead. We know that you have plans for us as a church - and we trust you. We pray that the right person will be drawn to us, that your Spirit will be at work.

Grant us a vision, Lord, to see what we can achieve, to reach out beyond ourselves, to stretch our capabilities, to increase our sense of purpose, to be sensitive to your presence at all times and listen to your call.

**Amen.**

## Notices:

**Joining Sundays online:** we are adapting our technology to make it easier to manage. This means we are no longer doing Zoom during Sunday services, but will livestream the service on our St Thomas facebook page. If you have been Zooming with us, do join us on facebook!

**Electoral roll:** our new updated roll will be out on display next Sunday.

**Faith Pictures:** a 6 week course on Zoom starting on Weds 5th May. A great informal space to practice talking about faith with others. Speak to Malcolm to sign up.

**APCM:** our APCM this year will be on **Sunday 9th May** after the morning service. You will be able to join via Zoom if you aren't at church in person. Please put this date in your diary! Those writing reports, please get them to Lyanne in good time.

**New Vicar Search:** Interviews are being conducted this week! Please keep all involved in the interview process in your prayers.

**Baby Bank:** the Suffolk baby bank we are hosting in the community room would welcome donations of tinned potatoes, instant mash, and dried/long-life milk.

**Booking for in-person services:** Sunday services must be booked into. Online booking forms are sent out via email. **To book by phone, call 01473 742973 and leave a message saying which service/s you are booking for, your name, and how many (including yourself) you are booking for.**

## **Pray for members of the St Thomas Congregation**

*Andrea McDonald with Fiona & Patrick; Nigel Messenger with Karen, Hayden & Harrison; Sma & Michael Ndlovu; Simon & Zuzana Pearson; Christine Perfect; David Pitt*

### This Week:

#### **Sunday 18th April**

**10am:** Eucharist (Andy Jefferson preaching) with facebook livestream

**6pm:** Youth Group (last one online!)

#### **Monday 19th April**

**11.30-1.30:** Church open for prayer

#### **Tuesday 20th April**

**7pm:** PCC on Zoom

#### **Wednesday 21st April**

**10am:** Eucharist

#### **Thursday 22nd April**

**11.30-1.30:** Church open for prayer

**7pm:** Alpha Social

#### **Sunday 25th April**

**10am:** Eucharist (Canon Chris preaching) with facebook livestream

### **Church website:**

<http://stthomasipswich.org.uk/>

**Sunday Worship & other Worship resources on the Church Facebook page:**

<https://www.facebook.com/stthomasipswich/>



**23rd:** Natacha Wilcox

### Contacts:

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***If you would like to chat, you could also ring:***

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Rev Jackie 07962 172639

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