

A song to sing or to read: You Are Mine

I will come to you in the silence, I will lift you from all your fear
You will hear my voice, I claim you as my choice
Be still, and know I am near

I am hope for all who are hopeless, I am eyes for all who long to see
In the shadows of the night, I will be your light
Come and rest in me

*Refrain: Do not be afraid, I am with you
I have called you each by name
Come and follow me
I will bring you home
I love you and you are mine*



I am strength for all the despairing, healing for the ones who dwell in shame
All the blind will see, the lame will all run free
And all will know my name *Refrain*

I am the Word that leads all to freedom, I am the peace the world cannot give
I will call your name, embracing all your pain
Stand up, now, walk, and live *Refrain*

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Closing Prayer

Gracious and loving God, in this Easter season, let us acknowledge that the Lord Jesus appeared to his disciples who had begun to lose hope. He opened their eyes to what the Scriptures had foretold. May the risen Christ breathe on our minds and open our hearts that we may know him in the way that was brought to his disciples. We are to follow him in his risen life; joining with our brothers and sisters in faith and believing. We are thankful for his granting us a share in the joy of his resurrection. **Amen**



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Church in a Bag
Sunday 19 April
Dubbo Uniting Church



A Gathering

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

And also, with all who hear the Word of the Lord.

When it was evening on that day, the first of the week, Jesus came and stood among the disciples and said "Peace be with you!"

The risen Christ is with me now, offering me the gift of peace.

Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

God, your Holiness is present in the chorus of life, breathing together, even here in this place.

Open our minds to the beauty of truth.

God of creation open us to the beauty in and around us in this time of worship.

Open our hearts to the joy of new life.

We too, have seen the Lord. Let us rejoice and give thanks.

Preparation

During our elementary years, as children and young people, we learn to join clubs, teams and other groups. We learned to know that members of each of these groups share common interests or experiences that hold the group together. Today we are looking at how the Christian Church as a group shares the experience of God's love and forgiveness in Jesus' resurrection. In groups we take care of each other. In our Christian Group we give strength to those who can doubt their own worthiness; who doubt the ability of their talents; who doubt their courage to do right in the face of strong actions; and who doubt that those in the group are understanding of any 'failures' to live by the rules the group are forgiven. We learn that we are as Children of God's Light and not of Darkness from wrongdoing.

First Reading: Acts 2:14a, 22–32

Reflection: Two thoughts



One: Sometimes it is easier to look elsewhere for our security and approval. Charles Shultz of “Peanuts” fame illustrated it this way. One day Charlie Brown stopped at the psychiatric help stand to talk with Lucy. He confesses "My trouble is I never know if I'm doing the right thing. I need to have someone around who can tell me when I'm doing the right thing". Lucy says "Okay. You're doing the right thing. That'll be five cents, please". Charlie Brown walks away with a smile on his face.

In a few minutes, he returns with a frown. "Back already?" asks Lucy, "What happened?" Charlie Brown says, "I was wrong. It didn't help. You need more in life than just having someone around to tell you when you're doing the right thing". Lucy says, "Now you've really learned something! That'll be another five cents please".

Two: Erasmus, the famous Renaissance scholar, once told a classic story which was designed to emphasize how important it is that we take up the torch of Christ's ministry with great commitment. In the story, Jesus returns to heaven after His time on earth. The angels gather around him to learn what happened during his days on earth. Jesus tells them of the miracles, his teachings, his death on the cross, and his resurrection.

When he finishes his story, Michael the Archangel asks Jesus, “But what happens now?”. Jesus answers, “I have left behind eleven faithful disciples and a handful of men and women who have faithfully followed me. They will declare my message and express my love. These faithful people will build my church”. “But,” responds Michael, “What if these people fail? What then is Your other plan?”. And Jesus answers, “I have no other plan!”.

Jesus is counting on you and you and you and me. But the good news is, we are not alone. The Holy Spirit is here to melt us, mould us, fill us, and use us.

Author James W Moore

Second Reading: John 20:19–31

Reflection

Some time back, a well-known talk show host visited a prestigious University to receive an award. After the ceremony he agreed to answer some questions from members of the press. One reporter asked, "What would you like to have inscribed on your tombstone?". Carson thought for just a second, then answered with the words he used before every commercial break on his television show. He wanted his tombstone to say, "I'll be right back".

Robert Strand, in his book, ‘Especially for the Hurting Heart’, has a wonderful discussion of Hebrews 13:5 in which we read these encouraging words: "God has said: Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you!". Strand asks, "Whatever does never mean?". And he notes that in the original language ‘never’ is really a compounding of five negatives. Not that each negative is added to another. Rather, each negative is multiplied by the other. According to Strand, it really should read, "I will never, no, not ever, no never leave you or forsake you!". It is a synergistic compounding negative. It's a forever never which has no exceptions! Then he asks, "What does ‘leave’ mean?". He says that in the original Greek it means ‘to leave behind, to abandon, to give up on, to send back’. Well then, so far, our verse will read: "I will never, no not ever, no never leave you behind, abandon you, give up on you, or send you back!".



Finally he asks, "What does 'forsake' mean?". In the Greek it means, ‘to leave one in a helpless state, to disregard’. It also can be further expanded to include ‘not relaxing my watchfulness over you’. To this point, then, says Strand, our verse, in the full, amplified version reads: "I will never, no not ever, no never give up on you, abandon you, leave you behind, cause you not to survive, leave you helpless, nor shall I ever relax concerning keeping my presence with you!". In other words, we can relax. God will always be there for us.

Author King Duncan