

The song continued

Courage in our darkness, comfort in our sorrow
Spirit of our God most high
Solace for the weary, pardon for the sinner
Splendour of the living God ... *Refrain*

Praise him with your singing, praise him with the trumpet
Praise God with the lute and harp
Praise him with the cymbals, praise him with your dancing
Praise God till the end of days ... *Refrain*

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Closing Prayer

Lord, at this time we know that we are not alone, we live in your world. We believe in God your father, who was created and is creating, who has come to us in our presence, the Word made flesh. To reconcile and make new, to teach us, to open our eyes beyond what lies before us in service to you.

Lord, we trust you. We have listened to your words of promise and mission. We seek light in the darkness. We breath in the life extraordinary brought through your spirit in us.

Saviour, today and everyday forward we all want to share a new journey with you. We are travellers in your world, and we know that you meet and travel with us to ensure that we do not lose focus of why you came and taught us, were crucified, died and rose again. We pray for the courage to bear our witness for you, even while we live with doubts and questions.

Make us today, a witness for you, in every moment. Show us today, the way to better serve you. **Amen**



Church in a Bag
26 April 2020
Dubbo Uniting Church



A Gathering

God of wonder and of unexpected delight. As we celebrate Christ's risen presence among us, we pray that you would open to us the messages of script, song and prayer we share today. Talk to us as we journey along life's way, meet us as we fellowship with one another, and so move in us that we may claim all your promises as our own. Open our eyes and quicken our hearts, as we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen

Preparation

When we are at our lowest, feeling abandoned consider this image: A vine clings to an oak tree and in so doing finds the protection in times of trial that preserves it. If a violent storm should arise and the vine is on the side of the tree away from the wind, the tree serves to protect the vine from the wind, which would otherwise tear it away and rip it into shreds. If the vine is on the exposed side of the tree, the wind serves only to press the vine closer to the tree it already clings to.

In the storms of our life, God will at times set himself between us and the fury of the storm and so protect us from it. At other times, he will expose us to the storm so that its ravages may serve to press us closer to him.

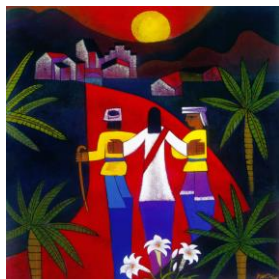


First Reading: Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19

Reflection

Deep in the Arabian desert is a small fortress. It stands silently on the vast expanse of the ageless desert. Thomas Edward Lawrence, known as "Lawrence of Arabia," often used it. Though unpretentious, it was most sufficient. Its primary commendation was its security. When under attack, often by superior forces, Lawrence could retreat there. Then the resources of the fortress became his. The food and water stored there were life supporting. The strength of the fortification became the strength of its occupants. When Lawrence defended it, it defended him. As one relying on the garrison, he was the object of its protection. Its strength was his. Old desert dwellers living around there have told me that Sir Lawrence felt confident and secure within its walls. He had on occasion to depend on the fort; it provided his need. He learned to trust it; his experience proved its worth. Like that fort, "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knows those that trust in him". Through prayer we enter God's fortress.

Author James Hewlett



Second Reading: Luke 24:13-35

Reflection

Driven as the two disciples were by very different emotions, we cannot fail to notice the contrast between the speed of the journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus, and that of the journey back to tell of the meeting with the risen Jesus.

It can be hard to get ourselves moving when we are weighed down with worries and disappointments. The Church has never pretended such stresses are not real, but it has always looked for ways to help people meet with Jesus personally – eg through prayer. If we are struggling and finding our path difficult, are there ways we can encounter Jesus and allow him to meet us in – and transform – our situation?

Although the two disciples engage Jesus in conversation, it is not a 'head to head' conversation; it is a walking alongside. A talking and sharing in which all are, in a sense, equal – all listening, speaking, learning, discovering. It is also 'of (or in) the moment'. It is now. We can be good at looking back, seeing what God has done in our lives. We can also be good at looking forward, thinking about and praying for how our life might be with God. What about now? The breaking of bread- so often a time of sharing- is a now moment. Do we spend enough time living in the now, talking about what God is doing in our lives right now?

The resurrection message was not what God would change for us, but what we would change for God - beginning with an unbroken reverence for Him and then living the loving Word and deed between each other. So instead of thinking misery and despair, we are to think about the goodness of God we can share.

A song to sing or to read: The Lord's Goodness (TiS 183)

Sing of the Lord's goodness, Father of all wisdom
Come to him and bless his name
Mercy he has shown us, his love is forever
Faithful to the end of days

Refrain

*Come then all you nations, sing of your Lord's goodness
Melodies of praise and thanks to God
Ring out the Lord's glory, praise him with your music
Worship him and bless his name*

Power he has wielded, honour is his garment
Risen from the snares of death
His word he has spoken, one break he has broken
New life he now gives to all ... *Refrain*

Continued over....