NORWICH CATHEDRAL EVENSONG APRIL 2016

**READINGS** (RSV)

**Psalm 113**

**Praise the Lord!**

Praise, O servants of the Lord,

    praise the name of the Lord!

2

Blessed be the name of the Lord

    from this time forth and for evermore!

3

From the rising of the sun to its setting

    the name of the Lord is to be praised!

4

The Lord is high above all nations,

    and his glory above the heavens!

5

Who is like the Lord our God,

    who is seated on high,

6

who looks far down

    upon the heavens and the earth?

7

He raises the poor from the dust,

    and lifts the needy from the ash heap,

8

to make them sit with princes,

    with the princes of his people.

9

He gives the barren woman a home,

    making her the joyous mother of children.

Praise the Lord!

**Psalm 114**

**God’s Wonders at the Exodus**

When Israel went forth from Egypt,

    the house of Jacob from a people of strange language,

2

Judah became his sanctuary,

    Israel his dominion.

3

The sea looked and fled,

    Jordan turned back.

4

The mountains skipped like rams,

    the hills like lambs.

5

What ails you, O sea, that you flee?

    O Jordan, that you turn back?

6

O mountains, that you skip like rams?

    O hills, like lambs?

7

Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord,

    at the presence of the God of Jacob,

8

who turns the rock into a pool of water,

    the flint into a spring of water.

**Isaiah 63:7-14Revised Standard Version (RSV)**

**God’s Mercy Remembered**

7  I will recount the steadfast love of the Lord,

    the praises of the Lord,

according to all that the Lord has granted us,

    and the great goodness to the house of Israel

which he has granted them according to his mercy,

    according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

8  For he said, Surely they are my people,

    sons who will not deal falsely;

    and he became their Savior.

9  In all their affliction he was afflicted,[a]

    and the angel of his presence saved them;

in his love and in his pity he redeemed them;

    he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

10  But they rebelled

    and grieved his holy Spirit;

therefore he turned to be their enemy,

    and himself fought against them.

11  Then he remembered the days of old,

    of Moses his servant.

Where is he who brought up out of the sea

    the shepherds of his flock?

Where is he who put in the midst of them

    his holy Spirit,

12  who caused his glorious arm

    to go at the right hand of Moses,

who divided the waters before them

    to make for himself an everlasting name,

13     who led them through the depths?

Like a horse in the desert,

    they did not stumble.

14  Like cattle that go down into the valley,

    the Spirit of the Lord gave them rest.

So thou didst lead thy people,

    to make for thyself a glorious name.

Footnotes:

a Isaiah 63:9 Another reading is he did not afflict

**Luke 24:36-49 Revised Standard Version (RSV)**

**Jesus Appears to His Disciples**

36 As they were saying this, Jesus himself stood among them. 37 But they were startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit. 38 And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do questionings rise in your hearts? 39 See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have.”[b] 41 And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate before them.

44 Then he said to them, “These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.” 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, 46 and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47 and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations,[c] beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high.”

We do ask that the sermon lasts around 10 minutes (1,000 to 1,200 words).

SERMON

A few years ago, a man was trying to explain the Easter story to his 5 year old son. They were sitting in church before the service began and the father pointed to the cross and said, "See the cross? The people put Jesus on the cross. The people killed Jesus."
The 5 year old boy was taking all this in with great attention. He looked around very nervously, then asked in a whisper: “You mean…these people?"

Ofcourse, it wasn’t us – don’t worry. We’re not the crucifiers And yet in another sense it was us – it was our sin that Jesus came to carry as much as anyone else’s – It was us he needed to rescue from death and evil and hurt.

And the same is true of this afternoon’s story. Ofcourse it wasn’t us who met Jesus on the first night after Easter, full of doubts and questions and ended up being sent out by him to change the world. And yet if we are Christians, that has happened to us too - this story is our story. It holds within it the story of personal encounter and the mission of every Christian. And what I want us to do now is simply to pause to apply this story in our lives.

So take yourself back to that first night of Easter. The disciples have been to hell and back in the previous week - their leader and dearest friend has been horribly executed as a criminal and now his body has disappeared. You’re all very emotional - and some of you are claiming to have seen Jesus alive again. In fact two people have just rushed in hotfoot from Emmaus full of breathless stories about Jesus being recognised when he broke bread. And then… there he is with you, of course there’s shock, of course you’re frightened. Ofcourse half of you think its a ghost. And Jesus is all reassurance - “Peace be with you” he says, “Come touch me, come see my hands and side - come, give me something to eat, come do the tests you need to do to answer your doubts.

**SO APPLICATION NUMBER 1**: Our journey may begin in a dark place with grief and fear and doubt - That’s ok - Jesus isn't afraid of our doubt - he invites us to do what we need to do to get to the bottom of who he is. I love that phrase “they disbelieved for joy” I wonder how many of us have held back from trusting Jesus at some point in our lives because it seemed just too good to be true. Jesus is not phased by our fear, he speaks peace into our lives.

And then while the disciples are still reeling from the shock of it all, he turns to scripture - he explains what was written about his death, his resurrection and about the mission which they are to undertake.

**APPLICATION NO 2**. Jesus is the one who opens our minds to understand the scriptures. Being active in mission begins with being rooted in scripture.

**APPLICATION NO 3**. is what Jesus says about the mission of the disciples which is our mission as well: What is at the heart of this mission? Jesus says

“repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations,”

The scriptures always affirmed that when God finally acted to fulfil the promises made to Abraham, Moses and the prophets, the whole world must be brought into his love and healing. This is the task now.

It is partly a message for individuals - there is no greater personal fulfilment than turning away from sin and celebrating God’s forgiveness.

But repentance and forgiveness go much wider as well

At General Synod, I found myself sitting next to Bishop Angaelos of the Coptic Church. He is a remarkably unpretentious man who has led a remarkable response to ISIS persecution of Coptic Christians.

Back in February 2015,ISIS released a video depicting the beheading of 21 Coptic Christians. On receiving confirmation, Angaelos sent out a tweet to officially announce the deaths. The hashtag was, "Father forgive".

A year on, the Bishop Angaelos says

"That hashtag has really set the tone for how Copts have responded,""From own community I haven't heard a single message of vengeance or anger used."

"An even stronger and more inconceivable message of forgiveness came from their families and communities," said Angaelos in a statement to commemorate the anniversary.

"They rejected the temptation to become bitter, angry and vengeful, and inspired the world with their gracious and courageous sentiment. Speaking proudly of the resilience of their fathers, brothers, and sons, who had captured the attention of the whole world, they also uttered their forgiveness for those who had so brutally and needlessly taken their lives, and who sought to rob them of their dignity.”

Repentance and forgiveness through faith in Jesus -these are the miracle - made possible by Jesus death and resurrection - They are the agenda which can change the world.

So… Three things for us to apply

1. It’s ok to start in doubt and darkness - because the peace is Christ’s provision
2. Being active in mission begins with being rooted in scripture
3. The message entrusted to us for the world is one of repentance and forgiveness of sins
4. APPLICATION No 4 is Jesus words to his disciples “Wait in the City till you have been clothed with power from on high.” Let’s not pretend that any of this is easy - The first disciples were told to wait for the power of the Holy Spirit. It’s not their job alone. It is not our job alone either. The Holy Spirit is already alive and active in the worldwide Church - our waiting is different - not for another Pentecost - but a waiting upon the Lord each day, a filling each day to share his love, his forgiveness. The mission of the disciples -“repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all,” is our message

Picture that five year old, looking round this congregation with great seriousness, and asking his dad in a whisper: “You mean…these people?” Yes let’s reply “These people - it’s us.

Sally Gaze April 2016

The message of forgiveness and strength trumped the video's attempt to instil fear and hatred."Todays world is full of disputes, full of atrocities. Revenge is not going to improve matters. Our hope for the world is in forgiveness. In eternal life.Last year over a million people watched an interview on youtube with a 10 year old girl who’d fled Mosul in Iraql Asked about her feelings toward those who drove her from her home, Myriam wondered why they did this. Then she said: “I will only ask God to forgive them. Why should they be killed?”

A Coptic Christian whose two brothers were killed by Isis in Libya related a conversation with his 60-year-old mother. If someone from ISIS was in their village, “she said she would invite him in her home … and ask God to open his eyes.”

**[Luke 24:36-49](http://biblehub.com/sermons/luke/24-36.htm): CH Spugeon**

*And as they thus spoke, Jesus himself stood in the middle of them, and said to them, Peace be to you.…*

**I.** WHAT THEY WERE TO PREACH.

***1.*** Repentance.

(1)  Repentance as a duty.

(2)  The acceptableness of repentance.

(3)  The motives of repentance. Not mere fear of hell; but sorrow for sin.

(4)  Repentance in its perpetuity.

(5)  The source of repentance. The Lord Jesus Christ is exalted to give repentance.

***2.*** Remission of sins. Free, full, irreversible pardon for all who repent of sin, and lay hold on Christ by faith.

**II.** WHERE IT IS TO BE PREACHED. Among all nations. Divine warrant for missions.

**III.** But this is not all. We are actually told HOW TO PREACH IT. Repentance and remission are to be preached in Christ's name. What does this mean?

***1.*** Ought we not to learn from this that we are to tell the gospel to others, because Christ orders us to do so? In Christ's name we must do it. Silence is sin when salvation is the theme. But it means more than that.

***2.*** Not only preach it under His orders, but preach it on His authority. The true servant of Christ has his Master to back him up.

***3.*** But does it not mean, also, that the repentance and the remission which are so bound together come to men by virtue of His name? Oh, sinner, there would be no acceptance of your repentance if it were not for that dear name!

**IV.** Now, I shall ask your attention to the principal topic of the present discourse, and that is, that He told His disciples WHERE TO BEGIN. The apostles were not to pick and choose where they should start, but they were to begin at Jerusalem. Why?

***1.*** Because it was written in the Scriptures that they were to begin at Jerusalem ([Isaiah 2:3](http://biblehub.com/isaiah/2-3.htm); [Joel 2:32](http://biblehub.com/joel/2-32.htm); [Joel 3:16](http://biblehub.com/joel/3-16.htm); [Zechariah 14:8](http://biblehub.com/zechariah/14-8.htm)).

***2.*** I suppose that our Lord bade His disciples begin to preach the gospel at Jerusalem, because it was at Jerusalem that the facts which make up the gospel had occurred.

***3.*** The third reason why the Lord Jesus told them to begin at Jerusalem may have been that He knew that there would come a time when some of His disciples would despise the Jews, and there. fore He said — When you preach My gospel, begin with them. This is a standing commandment, and everywhere we ought to preach the gospel to the Jew as well as to the Gentile; Paul even says, "to the Jew first."

***4.*** The fourth reason for beginning at Jerusalem is a practical lesson for you. Begin where you are tempted not to begin. Naturally these disciples would have said one to another when they met, "We cannot do much here in Jerusalem. The first night that we met together the doors were shut for fear of the Jews. It is of no use for us to go out into the street; these people are all in such an excited frame of mind that they will not receive us; we had better go up to Damascus, or take a long journey, and then commence preaching; and when this excitement is cooled down, and they have forgotten about the crucifixion, we will come and introduce Christ gradually, and say as little as we can about putting Him to death." That would have been the rule of policy — that rule which often governs men who ought to be led by faith. But our Lord had said, "Beginning at Jerusalem," and so Peter must stand up in the midst of that motley throng, and he must tell them, "This Jesus whom ye have with wicked hands crucified and slain is now risen from the dead." Instead of tearing Peter to pieces they come crowding up, crying, "We believe in Jesus: let us be baptized into His sacred name." The same day there were added to the church three thousand souls, and a day or two afterwards five thousand were converted by the same kind of preaching. We ought always to try to do good where we think that it will not succeed.

***5.*** Begin at home. Look well to your own children, servants, brothers, sisters, neighbours.

***6.*** Begin where much has been already done. The Jerusalem people had been taught for centuries in vain; and yet Christ's disciples were to speak to them first. We must not pass the gospel-hardened; we must labour for the conversion of those who have enjoyed privileges but have neglected them.

***7.*** Begin where the gospel day is short. It was about to end at Jerusalem. Now, then, if you have any choice as to the person you shall speak to, select an old man. He is near his journey's end, and if he is unsaved there is but a little bit of candle left by the light of which he may come to Christ. Or when any of you notice a girl upon whose cheek you see that hectic flush which marks consumption — if you notice during service the deep "churchyard" cough — say to yourself, "I will not let you go without speaking to you, for you may soon be dead." We ought speedily to look up those whose day of grace is short.

***8.*** Begin, dear friend, where you may expect opposition. That is a singular thing to advise, but I recommend it because the Saviour advised it. If they began at Jerusalem, they would arouse a ferocious opposition. But nothing is much better for the gospel than opposition.

***9.*** The Saviour bade them begin at Jerusalem, because the biggest sinners lived there.