

Penge Congregational Church



April 2020 Newsletter

An initiative of Hope Together

We are asked to pray where we are, that God will give us opportunities to witness to Christ, at 8.20pm (20.20 hours) on the 20th of each month, for 20 minutes.

The Prayer for Monday 20th April:

Read John 11: 25: Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live again".

And pray:

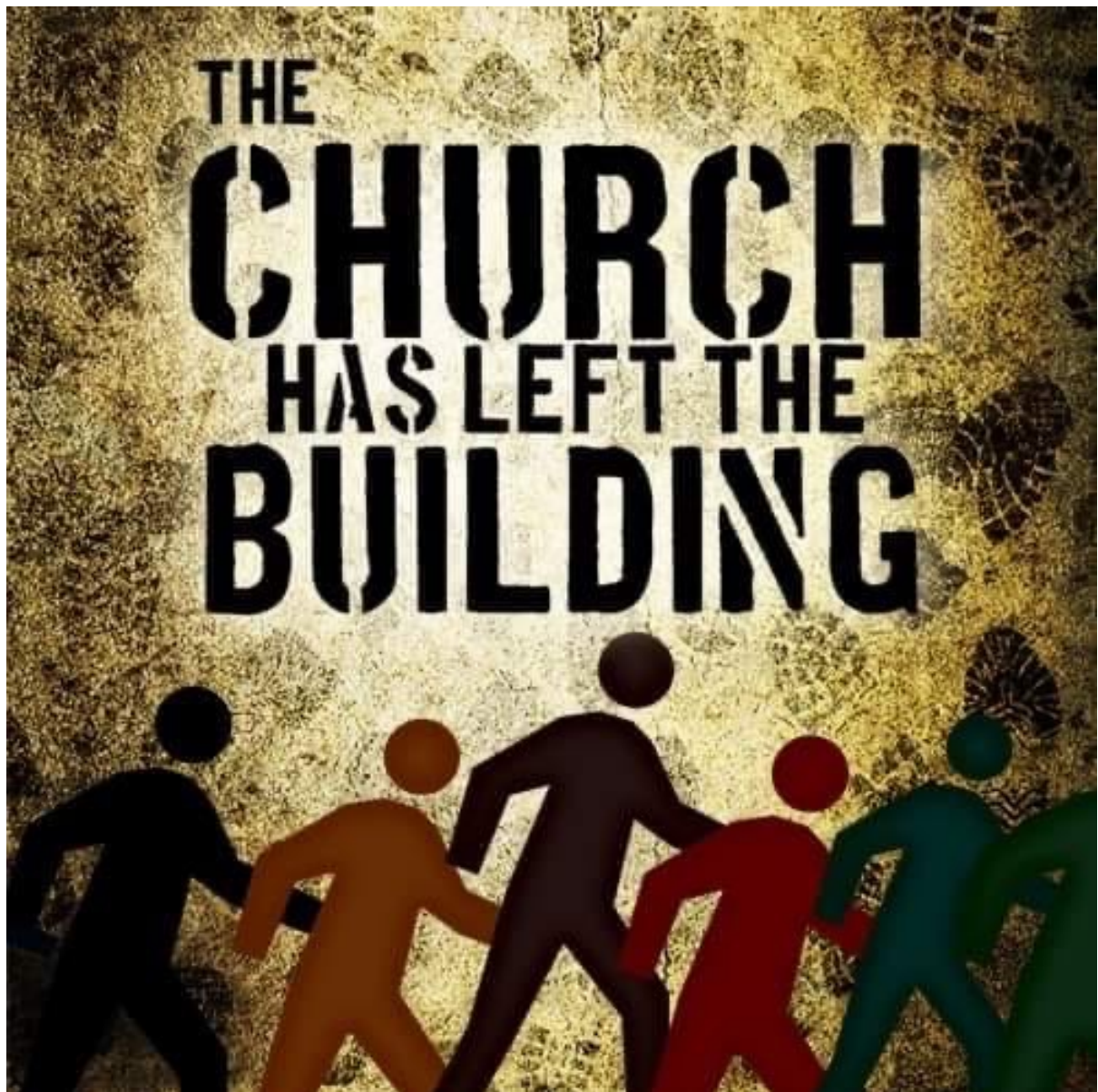
Risen Jesus, we rejoice in your resurrection. Help us to live today embracing the gift of life and hope that you have made available to everyone. We pray for those who don't yet know you, that we would be powerful witnesses to the great hope of resurrection for all.



*Pray ... that God
will give many
opportunities to
speak about Christ.*

Colossians 4:3





From the Minister

Do you look at the image above and think it is a sad image? In some ways of course it is. Chris Doran informs me that, even in wartime, there is no Sunday recorded when there wasn't a worship service at PCC. And it will be strange indeed on Easter Day to celebrate the Resurrection without meeting together and singing the great Easter hymns.

But actually, is it a sad image? Churches everywhere in these secular times when communities no longer gravitate automatically to their church buildings, have been looking for ways to take the hope of Christ out into the community. Could

it be that, temporarily relieved of the traditions of our Sunday services, we will find new ways of being church? Could this be the motivation we need to finally learn the lesson that church doesn't just happen on a Sunday? That being disciples of Jesus Christ is something we *are*, and something that is just as relevant and vital on a Tuesday or a Friday? That the people who need to hear the message of Easter are, on the whole, not inside the church building but out there in the community?

Of course at the moment, while we are in lockdown, while we are social distancing, we can't be out there on the street either! But churches everywhere are learning to live stream their worship on Facebook; conduct Bible studies and prayer on Google Hangouts or Zoom. Churches everywhere are thinking of unconventional ways to get the Word out there. I'm sorry if social media isn't something you are into, but the very people to whom we as the Body of Christ should be reaching out, *are*.

And so this difficult time is an opportunity for us to learn new ways of being disciples of Jesus Christ. New ways that will make the church more relevant to the people out there who so badly need to hear the Good News.

This *is* a difficult, desperate, time, and we all need the love of God, we all need the comfort of the victory of Easter more than ever. And it is at difficult times when people who never usually think about God look for spiritual comfort. Remember the words of Jesus to his disciples as he prepared to leave them and ascend into heaven. "Go and make disciples of all nations.. and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you". That is the Great Commission, the obligation Jesus lays on each one of us who belong to him. But remember also the words that follow: "I am with you always until the end of the age". By obeying the Great Commission, we bring that comfort also to those who need it so very much.

May God bless us this Easter.

"The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace." (Numbers 6: 24-27)

Pam

John Nockels

It is with the greatest sadness that I must tell the Church of the passing on 31st March of John Nockels who was Minister of PCC in the early 1990s.

I would hope that we do justice to John's work as a Minister and his long service for the Congregational Federation at a later date, but I just wanted to share a personal tribute with you.

John became Minister at a time when I was becoming involved with PCC, and it was through him that I revived my faith. He was a very gifted preacher and, as I listened to him Sunday after Sunday, I felt, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, my heart burn within me as he revealed the meaning of the Scriptures to me. It was for this reason that, when I had completed my studies with the Congregational Federation and was called by PCC as Associate Minister, John was the person I wanted to preside at my ordination. Although a Congregational Minister is ordained by their church, they receive their commission at the hands of the Presiding Minister, and it was tremendously important to me to receive mine from John.

When John retired, he and Ann went to live in Frome in Somerset. I retired myself as a School Librarian at the end of 2013, and every year since then, I have been fortunate enough

to be able to visit John and Ann in April or May, and spend time with them. John by the time of my first visit was in poor health and I felt it a great privilege to be accepted into their home as a friend and have long conversations with him and Ann.

Sadly, each year I visited, John's health had deteriorated a little more and his levels of pain and discomfort had increased. In the end, the Lord had compassion on him and took him to Himself.

John was a doughty pilgrim, and I am reminded of John Bunyan's description of the passing of Mr Stand-Fast in the chapter of The Pilgrim's Progress entitled, "The Final Summons":

"Then said he, 'I am going to my Father; and though with great difficulty I am got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the trouble I have been at to arrive where I am. My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage, and my courage and skill to him that can get it. My marks and scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me that I have fought His battles who now will be my rewarder.'.... So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side."

Pam



The poem below was discovered by Chris Parker's Mum in a book shop in Exeter, when she was an evacuee during the Second World War. It is very relevant to us today.

QUIET CONFIDENCE

I wish you now, mid'st all the world's sorrow
The quiet sense of being truly blessed.
We cannot tell what waits us on the morrow
But we can have in Him deep, quiet rest.

His hand, unseen, still rules over the nations,
His will is sovereign, even as His power.
Today o'er earth deep groans and lamentations,
But HE is ruling even in this dark hour.

Not sin, nor wrong nor (virus) unholy passion
Shall win the day, since HE is on the Throne,
Not so shall He His holy purpose fashion,
Though oft it seem that evil reigns alone.

In HIM we rest, our fortress, strong, abiding,
In HIM is peace and freedom from alarm;
And quiet strength and inward deep confiding
For HE can keep from every kind of harm.

We are unable to hold services at the moment because of the Coronavirus regulations. If you would like to follow Jesus and the disciples through Holy Week, Good Friday and Easter; and then to the remaining Sundays in April, here are some readings for you.

5th April Palm Sunday Luke 19: 28-40

28 After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. 29 When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰saying, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹If anyone asks you, "Why are you untying it?" just say this: "The Lord needs it." ' ³²So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. ³³As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, 'Why are you untying the colt?' ³⁴They said, 'The Lord needs it.' ³⁵Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. ³⁷As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, ³⁸saying,

'Blessed is the king
who comes in the name of the Lord!
Peace in heaven,
and glory in the highest heaven!'

³⁹Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, order your disciples to stop.' ⁴⁰He answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.'

Monday 6th April Luke 19:41-48

41 As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, ⁴²saying, 'If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things

that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side. ⁴⁴They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God.’ ⁴⁵ Then he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling things there; ⁴⁶and he said, ‘It is written, “My house shall be a house of prayer”; but you have made it a den of robbers.’

⁴⁷ Every day he was teaching in the temple. The chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people kept looking for a way to kill him; ⁴⁸but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were spellbound by what they heard.

Tuesday 7th April Luke 20: 1-19

One day, as he was teaching the people in the temple and telling the good news, the chief priests and the scribes came with the elders ²and said to him, ‘Tell us, by what authority are you doing these things? Who is it who gave you this authority?’ ³He answered them, ‘I will also ask you a question, and you tell me: ⁴Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?’ ⁵They discussed it with one another, saying, ‘If we say, “From heaven”, he will say, “Why did you not believe him?”’ ⁶But if we say, “Of human origin”, all the people will stone us; for they are convinced that John was a prophet.’ ⁷So they answered that they did not know where it came from. ⁸Then Jesus said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.’ ⁹ He began to tell the people this parable: ‘A man planted a vineyard, and leased it to tenants, and went to another country for a long time. ¹⁰When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants in order that they might give him his share of the produce of the vineyard;

but the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. ¹¹Next he sent another slave; that one also they beat and insulted and sent away empty-handed. ¹²And he sent yet a third; this one also they wounded and threw out. ¹³Then the owner of the vineyard said, "What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him." ¹⁴But when the tenants saw him, they discussed it among themselves and said, "This is the heir; let us kill him so that the inheritance may be ours." ¹⁵So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? ¹⁶He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.' When they heard this, they said, 'Heaven forbid!' ¹⁷But he looked at them and said, 'What then does this text mean: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone"?' ¹⁸

Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.' ¹⁹When the scribes and chief priests realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to lay hands on him at that very hour, but they feared the people.

Wednesday 8th April Luke 21: 5-19

5 When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, ⁶'As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.' 7 They asked him, 'Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?' ⁸And he said, 'Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, "I am he!" and, "The time is near!" Do not go after them. 9 'When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately.' ¹⁰Then he said to them, 'Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; ¹¹there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and

plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven. ¹² 'But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. ¹³ This will give you an opportunity to testify. ¹⁴ So make up your minds not to prepare your defence in advance; ¹⁵ for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. ¹⁶ You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷ You will be hated by all because of my name. ¹⁸ But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹ By your endurance you will gain your souls.

9th April Maundy Thursday Luke 22: 7-30, 39-53

7 Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. ⁸ So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, 'Go and prepare the Passover meal for us that we may eat it.' ⁹ They asked him, 'Where do you want us to make preparations for it?' ¹⁰ 'Listen,' he said to them, 'when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house he enters ¹¹ and say to the owner of the house, "The teacher asks you, 'Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' " ¹² He will show you a large room upstairs, already furnished. Make preparations for us there.' ¹³ So they went and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.
14 When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵ He said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶ for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.' ¹⁷ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves; ¹⁸ for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.' ¹⁹ Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my

body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' ²⁰And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. ²¹But see, the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table. ²²For the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!' ²³Then they began to ask one another which one of them it could be who would do this. ²⁴A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. ²⁵But he said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. ²⁶But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. ²⁷For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. ²⁸'You are those who have stood by me in my trials; ²⁹and I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, ³⁰so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

³⁹ He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. ⁴⁰When he reached the place, he said to them, 'Pray that you may not come into the time of trial.' ⁴¹Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, ⁴²'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.' [[⁴³Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. ⁴⁴In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.]] ⁴⁵When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, ⁴⁶and he said to them, 'Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial.' ⁴⁷ While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to

kiss him; ⁴⁸but Jesus said to him, 'Judas, is it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?' ⁴⁹When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, 'Lord, should we strike with the sword?' ⁵⁰Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. ⁵¹But Jesus said, 'No more of this!' And he touched his ear and healed him. ⁵²Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple police, and the elders who had come for him, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit? ⁵³When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!'

10th April Good Friday Luke 23: 26-49

26 As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. ²⁷A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. ²⁸But Jesus turned to them and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹For the days are surely coming when they will say, "Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed." ³⁰Then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us"; and to the hills, "Cover us." ³¹For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?'
32 Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. ³³When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. [[³⁴Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.']] And they cast lots to divide his clothing. ³⁵And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, 'He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!' ³⁶The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, ³⁷and saying, 'If

you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!’ ³⁸There was also an inscription over him, ‘This is the King of the Jews.’ ³⁹One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, ‘Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!’ ⁴⁰But the other rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?’ ⁴¹And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.’ ⁴²Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ ⁴³He replied, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.’

⁴⁴It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, ⁴⁵while the sun’s light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.’ Having said this, he breathed his last. ⁴⁷When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, ‘Certainly this man was innocent.’ ⁴⁸And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. ⁴⁹But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

Saturday 11th April Luke 23: 50-56

⁵⁰Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, ⁵¹had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. ⁵²This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁵³Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. ⁵⁴It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning. ⁵⁵The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. ⁵⁶Then they returned, and

prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

Sunday 12th April. Easter Day Luke 24: 1-12

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ²They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they went in, they did not find the body. ⁴While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. ⁶Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.' ⁸Then they remembered his words, ⁹and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹²But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

Sunday 19th April Luke 24:13-34

¹³ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in

Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' ¹⁹He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.' ²⁵Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. ²⁸As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' ³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!'

Sunday 26th April Luke 24: 36-53

36 While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' ³⁷They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸He said to them, 'Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.' ⁴⁰And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he took it and ate in their presence.

44 Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'

50 Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. ⁵¹While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵²And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; ⁵³and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

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