

St Bartholomew's Burnley, Sunday 12th April 2026
(Second Sunday of Easter)

Last Sunday, Easter Day, the joy of the resurrection of Jesus is surrounded by feelings and expressions of disbelief, doubt, fear, and anxiety. The full realisation of what has happened takes time. The disciples and followers are dispirited, their state of mind confused, disappointed with elements of panic and anxiety. When Mary arrives at the tomb she is fragile. She is grief stricken. The other disciples run away. Their hopes and expectations are gone or shattered. They huddle together behind closed doors as we read today in the Gospel of John. . Because of their close association with Jesus feel they are “marked men” as we would say. Possibly their own lives are in danger. But amid their terror and fear, the Risen Jesus appears in their midst. John clearly has the Genesis creation story in mind when he describes Jesus as breathing the Holy Spirit on his disciples, as recorded in the second book of Genesis 2:7, not as an accident of history but with purpose and intent the Risen Christ recreates humankind by breathing the new life of the Holy spirit upon his followers.

The resurrection of Jesus and his promise of eternal faithfulness is a moment in history, a mind shattering, and momentous moment set to rekindle God's dream for the created order, the building of God's kingdom, a second and renewed chance for humanity, as one commentator describes it, and an opportunity for you and

me to participate and share in remembering the narrative daily in both word and deed and to offer the wisdom of God to a world in despair and fear.

Perhaps you may be here today having experienced darkness and despair . Perhaps you are here today not only to share in the baptism of Ruth and to share in the occasion and to support Tim and Lindsay but are conscious of the trouble the world seems to be in at the present time and struggling to find the love and peace we all hope for. I am sure the first disciples found themselves in a similar position.

In a sermon he preached on Easter Day the Archbishop of York in the United Kingdom spoke about the present times be thirsty times. We search for peace. We search for Justice. Many people search for water. Others search for meaning and purpose.

Mary and the disciples were thirsty for meaning. They were asking of and fearful for themselves as to what does the death of Jesus mean for our hopes and aspirations for a better world. A world of sharing, hope and love.

The message is clear. Jesus does not wait for us to have it all together as we say . He asks Mary why are you looking for the living among the dead. At that moment everything changes. To thirst means to be reassured. This is precisely what resurrection means. Not a resuscitated corpse but a living reality of life in the

present and in the future. A life to built not on abuse, discrimination, exclusion, wealth, class or ethnic background

So here is the challenge for each of us as we welcome Ruth into the Christian community of diverse and different believers . How are we to live a life of hope and love for others.

In today's Gospel Jesus says to Thomas, touch me here, but Thomas is probably only saying what the rest think in their hearts.

For the disciples of Jesus his death ushered in a new wilderness where all seemed to be lost. John moves this wilderness experience into a new realm. Shut in and frightened behind closed doors Jesus appears and calls for peace amongst the bewildered gathered disciples.

In today's Gospel Jesus takes their anxiety and despair and transforms by his appearance into renewed hope and new thinking.

So here in the resurrection event we have a pivotal moment in history where our vulnerability, our doubts, our failure to believe meet with the promise of God fulfilled, and in the hope that the resurrection of Jesus gives we are assured of Gods faithfulness and generosity. We are assured of God's commitment to the wellbeing of everyone and his dream for justice for all. Hope is not limited to feeling good, (even though I still hope Richmond may get a win game this season). Hope is to be transformed at both

the personal or individual level as well as the coming together as a whole, and we the believers in the resurrection are to be God's instrument, God's hands and minds in bringing this hope to fulfilment. Hope believed is what changes lives.

It as a faith community we trace our roots to the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus in breathing his spirit of peace and reconciliation upon his frightened disciples transforms them into a "radical" movement for change.

Today's Gospel gives us much food for thought as we gather to celebrate the feast of the Risen Christ. Building on our pasts and overriding our uncertainties and doubts equips us for asserting the presence of Jesus not only in the midst of the faithful but also in the dispirited, the disadvantaged and the hurting. It calls us all to bold witness and action.

The empty tomb calls us all to move beyond the past to a new horizon, beyond doubt to affirmation and to trust in the providence of God. What God has begun in the resurrection of Jesus he will complete in the fullness of time.

Let me conclude with this prayer:

Breathe your Spirit of peace into our tired, withered souls, O Risen Christ.

*May that peace re-create us in Eastern Hope?
That we may become a Church of peace and reconciliation,
Ministers of your forgiveness and witnesses to your resurrection to our broken crucified world.*