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EASTER 3C

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A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening Prayers

Lord of all creation,

I come into your presence today, bringing my whole self as an offering to you.

I come in my strength and in my weakness;

I come with hopeful expectations that I will meet with you today.

As I make this time to worship you,

May the troubles of the past be left in your hands.

May the worries I carry be eased by your grace.

And may the unspoken desires of my heart be acceptable to you.

Lord, I am here to meet with you.

As Saul fell to the ground on the Damascus Road,

I pray that I will be overwhelmed by your love and Spirit

And join with the chorus of angels proclaiming:

“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,

to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength

and honour and glory and praise!”

I offer that I am to you.

Amen.

Hymn: You give rest to the weary - [YouTube](#)

You may now wish to say the Lord’s prayer in a version or language you are most comfortable with.

Reading: [John 21:1-19](#)

Response to the reading

A few years ago, I was a regular member of a pub quiz team with a group of friends. I am truly terrible at pub quizzes and was there really to make up the numbers. Every week, without fail, I’d sit there for two hours and never, ever got any questions right. I used to say that if only we got a question on Charles Dickens I’d finally come into my own – a subject I felt was my speciality. Finally, one memorable week, the question I’d been waiting for came: “what year was Charles Dickens’ first novel published?” I still remember the sinking feeling now as my friends looked at me expectantly, and I realised, with horror, that I couldn’t remember the answer. I scabbled around in my head for a few fleeting moments of panic, and then took a guess that turned out to be way off. My friends have never let me forget it.

Can you think of a time you’ve failed at something you thought you were good at? That’s exactly what happens to Peter in today’s Gospel reading. He says to his friends, “I am going fishing”, and they go out together in the boat, but catch nothing. In the midst of his grief, Peter returns to something familiar, something he’s supposed to be good at, and yet it turns out even his old skills are letting him down.

Peter must have been feeling sad, confused, ashamed and exposed. Jesus, the person he has loved and followed, is dead – or is he? Jesus has appeared to the disciples already, but perhaps these appearances left them baffled, as well as jubilant. And maybe for Peter, ashamed that he denied Jesus, the notion that Jesus is alive and likely knows about his denial is not altogether comforting. Maybe he feels like a fraud amongst the other disciples, underserving of his place in their community. Well, if he doesn't have what it takes to be a disciple, at least – he thinks – he can always go back to his fishing.

When Peter says “I am going fishing” he is returning to his old and familiar way of life. He is going back to business-as-usual, to a life before he first encountered Jesus. But he is forgetting that his journey with Jesus has already changed things for him – and will continue to change things for him. So when he glimpses Jesus on the shore, he has a choice. Does he stay in the boat and choose disappointment, shame, despair - the old ways – or does he move towards Jesus and choose redemption, forgiveness and a new way.

When we are feeling sad, confused, ashamed or exposed how often do we fall into old familiar patterns that enforce our sense of failure, that compound our loneliness, that solidify our shame? Like Peter, we have a choice – and it's the choice of new over old, life over death, light over darkness.

The exchange between Peter and Jesus by the charcoal fire on the beach is intended to remind us of another exchange by a different fire. On the night of Jesus arrest and crucifixion, Peter stands at a charcoal fire in a courtyard and denies Jesus three times before a cock crows. Two fires, two moments in Peter's life: one where he chose denial, one where he chose love. One is a fire stoked by fear and betrayal; one by reconciliation and forgiveness. One sparks with shame and wrong choices; one with opportunity and commissioning. One blazes with the worst of humankind; one fuels the furnaces of the Kingdom.

In our own lives we will have moments where we have huddled at both these firesides. We will also have moments of fruitless floating in a fishless boat on a dark sea. And moments of losing our heads in delight as we dive partly clothed into the ocean. And moments of unexpected breakfasts with friends we thought were long-lost, in the light of a new day.

Look back at the firesides of your lives, and the shorelines and the open water. Where do you notice the presence of Jesus? Where did you choose to move towards Jesus?

Peter learns that he cannot simply go back to the way things were. When Peter feels caught out by his own denial, he returns to what he knows best. But it turns out in fact that what he knows best is not how to fish, but how much he loves Jesus. Even fishing, his trade and craft, cannot save him from his shame – he cannot stake his life on it, instead, he must stake his life on the only one worthy of such a stake. Peter's vocation is not to be found in the night time of his old life, but in the new dawn of taking up Jesus' call to follow him. In choosing the way of Jesus, the way of love and forgiveness, things will change for him. His encounter with Jesus demands it.

The love that he professes three times to Jesus on the beach is the kind of love that is life-changing. It's a risky kind of loving that takes courage, that disrupts the way things were, that defies business-as-usual, and that is more powerful than shame or regret or fear.

Like Peter, we are called forwards, faithfully into God's future, away from our familiar ways – ways which allow us to wallow in our own shame or failure, ways which feel like safety but ultimately are destroying us. We are called forwards into fullness of light, and life, and love.

Can you think of times in your life where you've glimpsed the goodness of God?

These times give us a new vision for our future. They resource us for serving God. They affirm our calling. They teach us that our God is one of surprises, and being a follower of the way of Jesus will take us to unexpected places and leave us changed. And these times should serve as a reminder to us, that if we don't follow as faithfully as we might, the gift of grace means that Jesus will meet us afresh in the light of day, with the simple invitation to "follow me". How will you respond to Jesus' invitation today?

Blessing

Thine be the glory, risen and conquering son.

Thine be the glory, in the week ahead, in the small things and the big decisions that we make.

Thine be the glory, Lord Jesus as we seek to follow you, today and every day.

Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week

Monday

- God of the fireside, I pray for your Church.
- Forgive me, and all of us who call ourselves Christians for the times we are so caught up in fear that we forget to testify to your goodness.
- Give me courage to step into mission with you, to serve as you commission me, using the gifts you have given me to proclaim our love for you, to transform my life and the community around me, and to build your Kingdom here on earth.
- I ask: God of the fireside, forgive me this day.
Amen.

Tuesday

- You might like to use this prayer as a blessing or grace before one of your meals today:
- Gracious God, thank you for the many ways you have blessed me, and for the nutrition in the meals I am eating this day. Thank you for the strength that comes from my food to keep me going. Thank you for the tastes I can enjoy

and the refreshment I can feel.

Gracious God, today, as I eat, I remember that all I have is gift – and I look out on the world around me, knowing that many people are not as blessed as I am, and many will go hungry today.

God, help me to seek justice in your world.

Amen.

Wednesday

- Take a moment to look at your hands. Reflect on the things you have used them for already this week: to do housework, to write emails, to make phone calls, perhaps some digging in the garden or some manual labour tasks. Thank you God, for these hands. Help me to use them as your hands in the world – to use my body, my mind, my whole life, for the building of your Kingdom here on earth.
- Amen.

Thursday

- God of the new world, I pray about all the ways that we, human beings, have broken your world.
 - I ask your forgiveness for the times that we and our leaders have chosen a path of destruction, denial, or greed. I ask for your renewal in my heart, and in all of creation. May systems of injustice and oppression be overthrown and may each of us and the global leaders make better choices rooted in love, care, and protection of all life.
 - I ask: God of the new world, renew me this day, and renew all people who seek to follow in your ways.
- Amen

Friday

- When you have chance today, head outside and look up at the sky (ideally, you should avoid rain, hail or snow!)
- Take note of the clouds, of the speed they are moving, of the light the sun is casting, perhaps you can see the moon or some stars if it is after sunset.
- Under the vastness of the open sky, reflect on how far away the clouds are, and how much further the sun and the stars are...
- As you look at the huge expanse of the horizon, think about how much bigger our Creator is – how the God we worship knows each one of us and yet is also holding the whole universe together.
- You may wish to give thanks for the amazing universe you get to be a part of.

Saturday

- Holy God, you have called me here, in this moment, this day, this weekend.
 - Lord of life, I see you at work in the world around me.
Open my eyes and open my heart,
That I may be ready to receive your Spirit in my life.
- Amen.