

## **The Kingdom of God has come near.**

In recent weeks we have seen again pictures of our beautiful World from outer space. On returning to earth one astronaut commented, and I paraphrase, "Earth looked so beautiful but so vulnerable, there is no second plan.... Humankind need the earth and we need to care for our World.... this was his reflection, "the journey was both wonderful and challenging, but I return with an awakened sense of responsibility to care for the World that is **our** home. To care and not destroy, there is no second plan" A profound humility of insight from the gift of a new perspective.



Years earlier Hildegard de Bingen, with her feet firmly planted on the ground, said, "Do not injure the earth, for of all creatures, humankind is most dependent upon it".

Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) warned that "The earth which sustains humanity must not be injured; it must not be destroyed". As a 12th-century mystic and eco-warrior, she emphasized that all nature is interconnected, warning that humans must treat the earth with care and mercy.

**So, at this Eastertide we return to Jesus' teaching,**

**"The Kingdom of God has come near".**

Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15; Luke 10:9.

What do these texts teach us about the Kingdom of God? How do we understand this in our daily lives? Is there a tendency for us to limit God to what we see, what we know, and what is familiar without recognising our limited knowledge and experience.

This month we live through the days from Ascension to Pentecost, the days Jesus asked the Disciples to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit, "the Comforter" John 16:7; Acts 1:4-8 and in these waiting days we pray, the Lord's Prayer for other people.

I have just returned from a Mothers' Union Retreat, and we were reflecting on the Resurrection appearances and what it means to live as Easter People, following in the footsteps of the disciples in those first Easter days of Revelation. What did the Easter Disciples wait for and what did they pray?

On the retreat we came to the empty tomb (John 20 1-18) with Mary Magadeline, and she found her "Teacher", but we had questions How? Why? Can we get past the limiting questions? Jesus appears to this disciple giving her spiritual insight and direction, sending her to the brothers, to bring a new time of proclamation, given to all people, for all time.

We travelled on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35) with the two disciples and the same questions How? Why? Their hearts burned within them as the stranger opened the Scriptures, the journeys of GOD with Ancient Forebears and the Prophets. Familiar words were given new meaning. Finally, the sign of broken bread, "Do this to re-member me". The disciples were not sent; they were compelled to return to the despondent Disciples with the Good News of the Living Word and Sign.

Finally, we came to the upper room, ((Jn.20:24-29) and Jesus appearing to Thomas. The same questions, How? and Why? Jesus came to the upper room a second time, to humbly offer his scars to Thomas, to fulfil a need, for Thomas to see for himself. We receive the unforgettable conversation that has been an encouragement to so many worshipers ever since.

As we wait, for the Feast of Pentecost we may ponder the same questions, How? Why? As we pray, "Thy Kingdom Come" and pray the Lord's Prayer for five people and invite one to join us in Mothers' Union fellowship.

Mary was sent to fearful disciples, the disciples on the road returned to the hope-less, Thomas fell down in worship, " My Lord, and my God" So, when we pray the words , "Thy Kingdom come" **we are being sent** to the fearful, the hopeless and doubting , the people we often shy away from. For we are Jesus' disciples and the Easter Message is the same teaching Jesus proclaimed. Wherever you are, you are in the Kingdom of God and Christ is close and in every place.

Those who have never heard the Gospels, realise the nearness of God, when you and I step into the fearful, strange, hopeless situations reaching out to their need with the words of invitation, words they need to hear, "Come there is a



place for you". Or, just as Jesus did, he looks out to see what needs restoration and meets that need and gives individuals, and communities a new future.

(1) Being an Easter Disciple is receiving "the Strengthener", "the Comforter", and God's Wisdom for renewal, not for just for ourselves but for others. To follow Jesus' ministry of awareness of need, stepping out from the familiar, transforming people's lives, and restoring individuals back into community with new purpose. The Kingdom of God has come near to you there is no limit, boundary or division, God is already present, God is present. "God is a circle whose centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere" (12thC Alain de Lille)... a profound paradox of divine omnipresence and infinity this metaphor suggests divinity is present in all places simultaneously remaining unbounded.

So, it is with Easter joy, not just for our own lives but for all people.

**There's a wideness in God's mercy,  
Like the wideness of the sea;  
There's a kindness in God's justice,  
Which is more than liberty.....**

**But we make God's love too narrow  
By false limits of our own.  
And we magnify a strictness,  
Zeal, that God does not condone.**

**So, the Risen Christ brings healing.  
In a World that sobs for love  
A movement of the Comforter,  
Through our lives, transforms,  
renews.**

**As we reach beyond our  
boundaries  
To those caught in pain and doubt  
We follow the Easter footsteps.  
Widen 'ng our own mercy's choice**

**There's a wideness in God's mercy,  
Spacious, vast as Time and Space  
There's a healing in God's justice,  
bringing change beyond our  
dreams.**



So, we pray for all Mothers' Union Projects and their outreach World-wide as we too respond to the promptings of the Spirit. Let us pray Mary Sumner's prayer and bring Easter life to others.

All this day, O gracious Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee; and every life I touch, do thou by thy spirit quicken, whether through the word I speak, the prayer I breathe, or the life I live.

Easter blessings to you all as we pray together.

**Ann Wren**



During the days of "Thy Kingdom Come" Plait threads in earth colours into a prayer bracelet or carry this picture with you. Giving thanks for our relationships within Mothers' Union and our outreach and care for those people still waiting to be invited to join us. Each day pray for a greater care for the earth that sustains us all and our interconnectedness with the God who is Lord of all creation.

Jesus is risen, Alleluia!