

Retreat Day

APRIL

... Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place...
(Mark 6:31)

Seeing Jesus



This month we focus on the disciples of Jesus who saw Him after His resurrection. We think about what that was like for them – and what is it like for us to see Jesus. We will also reflect on those who didn't at first see Jesus...or didn't see Him at all.

Everything we do or say, the way we live our lives and connect with others, every part of our lives, is impacted by how we see Jesus and how we pay attention to His presence in our lives. Everything is likewise impacted by how we don't see Jesus, by the times we miss seeing Him at work or are unaware of Him.

We celebrate the resurrection of the glorious Lord when we truly see Him in and around us.

This material includes written prayers and Scripture passages for reflection. Songs are provided to reflect on, to sing, or to find on YouTube and listen to – whatever you find helpful. Some songs you may not know, or not know well – this can be a good opportunity to discover something new and/or just to reflect on the text. The writers of the songs and prayers are provided if you want to look them up yourself. There are also various suggestions to deepen your reflection experience Do whatever you find helpful – or something else entirely. We all have different ways of connecting with God (and with others) so find what works for you – or maybe try something new.

On-line Clip <https://youtu.be/pZ5v16L9pC8>

SEEING JESUS!

Call to worship

Open our eyes, Lord
We want to see Jesus
To reach out and touch Him
And say that we love Him

Open our ears, Lord
And help us to listen
Open our eyes, Lord
We want to see Jesus!



Scripture

²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”
John 20:24-25

Song

Blessing, honour, glory to the Lamb,
Holy, Righteous, worthy is the Lamb,
Blessing, honour, glory to the Lamb,
Holy, Righteous, worthy is the Lamb.

Death could not hold Him down,
For He is risen,
Seated upon the throne,
He is the Lamb of God.

Prayer

Lord, teach me to seek you,
and reveal yourself to me as I look for you.
For I cannot seek you unless first you teach me,
nor find you unless you first reveal yourself to me. ⁱⁱ

Scripture

¹¹ Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³ They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”

“They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” ¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

¹⁵ He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”).

¹⁷ Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

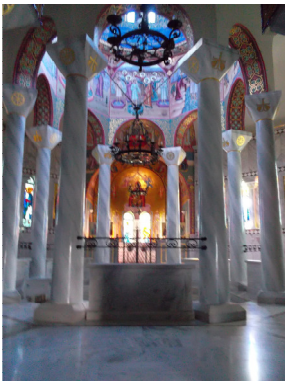
¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.

John 20:11-18

Song

All heaven declares the glory of the risen Lord
Who can compare with the beauty of the Lord?
Forever He will be (Forever He will be)
The Lamb upon the throne (The Lamb upon the throne)
I gladly bow the knee (I gladly bow the knee)
And worship Him alone

I will proclaim the glory of the risen Lord
Who once was slain to reconcile man to God
Forever You will be (Forever You will be)
The Lamb upon the throne (The Lamb upon the throne)
I gladly bow my knee (I gladly bow my knee)
And worship You alone



Prayer

Eternal Trinity, you are a deep sea,
into which the more I enter the more I find,
and the more I find the more I seek.
The soul ever hungers in your abyss, Eternal Trinity,
longing to see you with the light of your light,
and as the deer yearns for the springs of water,
so my soul yearns to see you in truth.ⁱⁱⁱ

Scripture

¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing him...

²⁸ As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther.

²⁹ But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.

³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them.

³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

Luke 24:13-32

Reflection

Mary did not realize it was Jesus she saw.
Thomas could not believe until he saw Jesus with his own eyes.
The disciples on the road to Emmaus did not recognise him.
Those who should have recognized him, did not at first see him for who he was.

The blind man did not know who Jesus was but knew he was from God (John 9:33).

Jesus condemned those who claimed they could see but who were spiritually blind (John 9:41)

And Judas? Judas totally missed out on seeing the resurrected Lord (as far as we know).

What prevents people from seeing Jesus?

What prevents us from seeing Jesus as he truly is?

We believe Jesus was raised from the dead and is the living, glorious Lord.
We have experienced the reality of this in our own lives.

Yet there are times we remain blind.
Inattentive to His presence.
Unaware of His movement in our lives or in our circumstances.

What blinds us to the presence of Jesus?

What mud might we need to wash from the eyes of our hearts in order to see him more clearly?

(Silence)

Scripture

¹¹ He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see." John 9:11

Prayer

O Lord our God, grant us grace to desire you with our whole heart,
So that desiring you, we may seek and find you;
And so finding you, may love you;
And so loving you, may hate those sins which separate us from you,
For the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.^{iv}



Song

Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art;
Thou my best Thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word;
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son;
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Be Thou my battle Shield, Sword for the fight;
Be Thou my Dignity, Thou my Delight;
Thou my soul's Shelter, Thou my high Tow'r:
Raise Thou me heav'nward, O Pow'r of my pow'r.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
Thou mine Inheritance, now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art.

High King of Heaven, my victory won,
May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heav'n's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whate'er befall,
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.

Prayer



O gracious and holy Father,
give us wisdom to perceive you,
intelligence to understand you,
diligence to seek you,
patience to wait for you,
eyes to behold you,
a heart to meditate upon you,
and a life to proclaim you,
through the power of the Spirit
of our Lord Jesus Christ.^v

Benediction

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father,
give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.
May the eyes of your heart be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called
you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people,
and his incomparably great power for us who believe.
based on Ephesians 1:17-19

GOING DEEPER – SEEING JESUS IN ALL THINGS

Here are some suggestions that may help you in your time of reflection.

- **Reflect:** Read through the Reflection again. Notice what stands out for you and think about why this might be. Think of the words: did not recognise, did not realise, did not see, blind. How do you feel when you read these words? Where in your life do these words resonate?
- **The Bible** is full of examples of people who saw Jesus yet failed to truly see Him and recognise who He was and why He came. Reflect on one of these examples, thinking about the context and what God is saying. How easy is it for us today to miss out on seeing where Jesus is present and active? What things blind us to His presence and activity? What can we do about it?
- Use one of the Bible passages or songs provided in the material to practise **Lectio Divina**.
- **Visualise Scripture!** Think of the story of Mary at the tomb, or the disciples on the road to Emmaus, or Thomas missing out on seeing Jesus – or any other story that comes to mind. Slowly read the story through. After each verse, close your eyes and picture the scene being described. What do you see, smell, hear? What would it feel like if you were there? What would that be like for you if you failed to recognise Jesus? How is God speaking to you through this? You could either record this experience in your journal or share it with someone.
- **Be creative:** think about a time recently when you didn't at first realise the presence or activity of Jesus. What changed your awareness? You might like to draw, paint, write, dance or sing about this experience to more deeply reflect on it.
- Go for a **walk**. What do you notice as you walk? Where do you see the presence of the risen Lord and His life-giving power?
- If you are **sharing** this retreat day with someone else, spend some time sharing your experiences of seeing Jesus at work or present in unexpected ways or places. Share what God might be saying to you about this. Pray together.
- If you like to **journal**, make a note of what you have experienced during this retreat time in your journal. A simple way to do this is to:

Thank God for Who He is and what He is doing in your life

Notice what is happening around you and in you

Respond to what God has shown you, by thanking Him, repenting, or recommitting yourself to Him

- **Simply sit in His presence.** We don't have to do anything to enjoy being in His presence! We are in His will when we are fully and completely in His presence, with our hearts focussed on Him.
- **The Prayer of Examen** (at the end of this document) is a very good tool to develop a greater awareness of recognising Jesus in every part of life.

EVEN DEEPER

LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina is an ancient spiritual practice from the Christian monastic tradition. Its title derives from the Latin words meaning reading and divine/holy. In Lectio Divina, we seek to experience the presence of God through reading and listening, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. Lectio Divina can be practiced both by individuals and in groups.

Practicing Lectio Divina Individually

1. Text

Begin by choosing a section of Scripture that you would like to read and pray. You can choose the text randomly or use a liturgical book, such as The Book of Common Prayer. Try not to set a goal for how much content you will cover; the goal is to listen for God and to experience his presence.

2. Preparation

Do what you must to quiet and prepare yourself to hear from God. If you need to find a quiet room, sit in silence for several minutes, or sit in a comfortable chair, take whatever posture will help you prepare to receive and experience God's presence.

3. Reading/Listening

When you sense that your heart is prepared, begin by slowly reading the passage of Scripture that you have selected. Move slowly through sentences and phrases. As you read, pay attention to what word, phrase, or idea catches your attention.

4. Meditation

Begin to meditate on the word, phrase, or idea that has captured your attention. Repeat it again and again.

Consider:

What thoughts come to mind as you meditate on this word, phrase, or idea?

What are you reminded of in your life?

What does it make you hope for?

Meditation is no easy task—as you try to concentrate don't be disappointed if random thoughts enter your head. As they do, offer them to God.

5. Prayer

Now begin to speak to God. Tell God what word, phrase, or idea captured your attention and what came to mind as you meditated upon it. How is God using this word, phrase, or idea to bless and transform you? Tell God what you have been thinking and feeling as you've listened and meditated. Tell God how you hope this word, phrase, or idea will change your heart to be more like His.

6. Contemplation

Finish by focusing your attention on the fact that God's presence is with you. If as you try to focus on God's presence you sense a need to read the text again, to continue meditating, or to simply continue talking with God, allow yourself to do so. As you do, know that you are in the presence of God.

THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN - Finding the movement of the Spirit in our daily lives as we review our day.

This is something that can be done throughout the day or at the end of the day. It helps us to become more aware of and focused on the presence of God in the midst of everyday life.

1. Recognize the presence of God

Be still and know that you are with God.

2. Look at your day with gratitude

Acknowledge God in the big and small things of life.

3. Review your day

When or where in the past 24 hours did you feel you were cooperating most fully with God's action in your life? When were you resisting?

Ask yourself

- What habits and life patterns do I notice?
- When did I feel most alive? Most drained of life?
- When did I have the greatest sense of belonging? When did I feel most alone?
- When did I give love? Where did I receive love?
- When did I feel most fully myself? Least myself?
- When did I feel most whole? Most fragmented?

4. Reconcile and Resolve

- Seek forgiveness
- Ask for direction
- Share a concern
- Express gratitude
- Resolve to move forward

SONGS

Blessing, Honour – Geoff Bullock (Praise Rhapsody, Track 4b)

All Heaven declares – Noel and Tricia Richards (The Best Worship Songs Ever, CD 1, Track 9)

Be Thou my vision – Dallan Forgaill, SASB

In Christ alone – Stuart Townend (There is a Hope Track 13)

ⁱ Robert Cull, 1976

ⁱⁱ St Ambrose (340-397) in Ashwin, A. (2002). *The Book of a Thousand Prayers*. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI. p. 21.

ⁱⁱⁱ St Catherine of Sienna (1347-1380) in Ashwin, A. *ibid.* p. 21.

^{iv} After St Anselm (1033-1109) in Ashwin, *ibid.* p. 21

^v St Benedict (c.480-c.547) in Ashwin, *ibid.* p. 21