

ROCHFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Welcome to

CHURCH AT HOME

Sunday 19th April 2020

Read through this outline and join with everyone else at 11am

Hymn (to sing or read)

I know that my redeemer lives!
What joy the blest assurance gives!
He lives, He lives, who once was dead,
He lives, my everlasting Head!

He lives to bless me with His love,
He lives, to plead for me above,
He lives, my hungry soul to feed,
He lives, to help in times of need.

He lives, and grants me daily breath,
He lives, and I shall conquer death,
He lives, my mansion to prepare,
He lives, to lead me safely there.

He lives, all glory to His name,
He lives, my Saviour, still the same,
What joy the blest assurance gives!
I know that my redeemer lives!

(Samuel Medley 1738-99 MP 278)

PRAYER

Take a moment to Praise God for his many blessings
(Perhaps you would like to say this prayer aloud or quietly in your heart:)

*Almighty God, our loving Heavenly Father,
Thank you for being with me in the last week. Thank you for the reality
of knowing your Son, Jesus, has conquered sin and death and has
promised to be with me always. May I continue to know this truth in
my experience during these unusual times we are facing.
Help those who are on the frontline in the battle against the Corona
Virus. Comfort those who mourn, strengthen those who serve and bring
your peace to those who are fearful. Thank you for all who have
volunteered to assist in any way.
Cause all your people to stay strong in faith at this time apart. Give us
prayerful hearts and listening ears to what you are saying to us during
this time. In Jesus wonderful Name we ask these things, Amen.*

You may like to say The Lord's Prayer too.

BIBLE VERSES FOR THE WEEK

"Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you...receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20.21-22)

"Because you (Thomas) have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have been believed" (John 20.29)

"...These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20.31)

"Living as a believer..."

Thomas was missing when Jesus first appeared to the disciples (v24) What he had seen and heard had happened was too much for him to take! The report of the horror of the crucifixion and then the news of his resurrection left Thomas bewildered. What is happening? Ever felt that way – perhaps you are feeling that way right now?

Jesus appeared to them again and this time Thomas is with them. Jesus addresses Thomas' reaction and encourages him to believe:

“Stop doubting and believe” (v27b)

It is hard to believe when we are lacking faith. The others told Thomas they had seen the Lord, but he needed to see Him for himself.

We cannot see the Lord physically – but faith comes through hearing the Word of God (Romans 10.17)

“Blessed are those who have not seen yet have believed” (v29b)

For when we believe (by faith) God's Word we are blessed with:

1. PEACE

“Peace be with you” (v19, v21, v26)

Again and again – as we believe in Jesus, we live in peace. After all, Jesus has conquered sin and death – is anything too hard for the Lord? Won't he see us through what we are facing? Isn't he preparing a place for us with him?

2. PURPOSE

“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (v21)

As we believe, we live, knowing our lives have a purpose – to give glory to God.

Even the difficulties and hardships have purpose. For they draw us nearer to the Lord, making us more dependent and Christ-like in our attitudes and actions.

3. POWER

“He breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit”” (v22)

Thomas was sad, feeling lost and afraid. He didn't have the resources or resolve to go on – he needed the Holy Spirit. He had lived (existed) a week without such help.

As we believe by faith in the Lord Jesus, we can (and need to) receive the Holy Spirit's help to live effectively for our Lord.

We had planned to have our baptismal service today (19th April) but it will now take place later in the year. Baptism is an outward expression of an inward reality. Baptism expresses, to watching family and friends,

that because the one being baptised believes upon the Lord Jesus; they will live for him – dying to themselves.

“Make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28.19)

(Maybe the delay to our baptismal service might mean you may prayerfully consider being baptised too?)

Are you walking by faith – rather than sight? Trusting where you cannot yet trace what the Lord is doing?

Let us all, be a people who believe and live by God’s Word – in peace, with purpose and in His power during these unsettling times. Amen.

Pastor Andrew

BENEDICTION

“May the favour (beauty) of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us – yes, establish the work of our hands”

(Psalm 90.17)