



Create a peaceful space to pause, and allow yourself to feel God's presence alongside you, as near to you as your own breath. In following the reflection below, as a church we will draw closer to God and to one another as we grow in faith and deepen our sense of belonging to God.

Luke 24: 44-48 'The Witnesses to Jesus Crucified and Raised'

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you – that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶ and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'

As we read the closing chapters of the gospels, it's easy to feel drawn into the drama as the story of end of the earthly life of Jesus is told. We get a feeling for the highs and lows experienced by those who followed him from the earliest days of his ministry.

After being with Jesus, listening to his teaching, watching as he healed and ministered to those around him, on Palm Sunday the disciples were waiting for him to declare the arrival of his kingdom, surely this was the day? The triumphal entry into Jerusalem, God's holy city, now must be the time for him to pronounce his kingship and bring about God's reign on earth. The disciples are on a high. But much was to happen before the excitement and expectation of Palm Sunday found fulfilment. Jesus was betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter, deserted by others who fled in fear for their own lives as their Master's cause seemed doomed. Jesus, their hero was arrested, mocked, tried, and finally crucified. What an end to all their hopes and expectations! But, amazingly, it was not the end of the story – more was to come. The joy of Easter morning with its empty tomb, and reports of Jesus being seen alive. With them again – the same, yet different – as he prepared them for a ministry to share the news of his kingdom. Then there was a waiting period of forty days as they watched and prayed until the time was right, and Pentecost arrived with God's Holy Spirit transforming them. From being disciples, called to follow him to being apostles, sent out empowered to proclaim that good news throughout the world. God's all-encompassing love for all of humankind from that day to this.



For those men and women, who lived through those amazing events over two thousand years ago, filled with evangelical zeal which brought others to faith in a living Lord, right down the years to us. For Christ comes to us in his Spirit to guide, direct, control our lives in this and every generation. Available every moment we live and breathe, and beyond to the hope of his promise of life with him unbroken by death.

Prayer: *To God be the glory, great things he has done!
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,
who yielded his life in atonement for sin,
and opened the life-gate that all may go in: Praise the Lord!*

Frances Jane van Alstyne (1820-1915)