

Peter knows this to be true, because he has seen Christ rise from the dead, and experienced the power of the Holy Spirit. He uses what he knows to spread the gospel, and look after the church, as instructed by Jesus. This eventually leads to his own execution, also on the cross. But even at that moment, Peter must have known that the war was won.

As for us, do we agree with Peter, is the answer to be found in Christ, and Christ alone? We have not experienced what he has experienced. As Philip says in our gospel reading today, “Show us the Father and it is enough for us.” That would be nice, but we’ll have to wait for the Second Coming for that. In the meantime, we have the eyewitness accounts of the deeds, resurrection and ascension of Christ. We have the deeds and words of the Church. We have the power of the Holy Spirit. And we know something that Peter knew too: Jesus won his war when he conquered death on the cross. If we won’t let Jesus lead us, who will we? In this present war, as in all others, follow the Sacrificial Lamb.

DO MAKE USE OF OUR WEBSITE We do have a website for THE STODDEN CHURCHES. If you are looking for service information you will find it there. Please make use of it, and it is somewhere you can suggest people look for information who are new to the area or the congregation

VIRTUAL COLLECTION PLATE: If you wish to be able to give electronically here are the Stodden Churches bank detail: Stodden account number 10842168 sort code 20-74-81

VIRTUAL CHURCH: If you want to “virtual worship” users can watch live streams of services from a range of churches and the Church of England will be improving AChurchNearYou.com in the days ahead to make this clearer. There is **Prayer for the day** - each day the Church of England publishes audio and text of the Prayer for the Day. There is the BBC daily service and Sunday worship also available on BBC Sounds.

PHONE CHURCH: *Daily Hope* offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line.

The line – which is available 24 hours a day on **0800 804 8044** – has been set up particularly with those unable to join online church services during the period of restrictions in mind.

The Stodden Churches **Prayers and Readings for the week beginning** **Sunday 10th May 2020** **The 5th Sunday of Easter**

Our Vision Statement: As the Stodden Churches we seek to move forward together in love and service, sharing the good news of Christ with our neighbours

From the Stodden Villages lease remember in your prayers : Teresa Allan, Pauline McManus, Steve Lemming, Trish Sizer, Frances Bratcher, Andy Langley, Andrew Seabrook, Rosemary Morgan, Anne Hauxwell. *If someone would like a visit or a prayer tell Stephen the Rector (709740)*

This week’s Psalm: 31:1-5

¹ In you, O LORD, I seek refuge;
do not let me ever be put to shame;
in your righteousness deliver me.

² **Incline your ear to me;
rescue me speedily.**

**Be a rock of refuge for me,
a strong fortress to save me.**

³ You are indeed my rock and my fortress;
for your name’s sake lead me and guide me,

⁴ **take me out of the net that is hidden for me,
for you are my refuge.**

⁵ Into your hand I commit my spirit;
you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.

**Be strong, and let your heart take courage,
all you who wait for the LORD.**

The Collect for this week: Eternal God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life: grant us to walk in his way, to rejoice in his truth, and to share his risen life; who is alive and reigns for ever. Amen

The 1st Reading: 1 Peter 2:2-10: ²Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— ³if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. ⁴Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and ⁵like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶For it stands in scripture:

'See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.'

⁷To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner',

⁸and 'A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.' They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

The 2nd Reading: John 14:1-14: Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴And you know the way to the place where I am going.' ⁵Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' ⁶Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.' ⁸ Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' ⁹Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? ¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. ¹²Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If in my name you ask me* for anything, I will do it.

Reflection In today's gospel reading from John, knowing the immense danger and upheaval they face so soon before the cross, Jesus tells his disciples to believe in him, to have faith that, through him, they have a wonderful, eternal future, with him, in God's house.

We are regularly being told in these days of Covid 19 that we are in a time of war. We are to be on a war footing and we need a war leader. But how do you define what it is to be a good war leader? Jesus and Peter travelled to Jerusalem on their way to war, but their understanding of what that war was differed radically. Peter believed that the war objective was to overthrow the authorities, especially the hated Romans who controlled their country. Jesus, on the other hand, had a rather more ambitious objective, to overthrow evil and death themselves and bring about a new creation. Which of these two men, based on our gospel readings recently, would you choose to follow?

Shortly before entering Jerusalem, Jesus announces to his followers that he is going there to "suffer many things... and be killed". Peter tells him to man up and stop being so negative. Which one would you follow into war? A few verses before our passage, Jesus kneels down and washes his disciples' feet. A leader's job? Peter doesn't think so and is appalled. Which one would you follow into war? Shortly afterwards, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus and Peter are falsely arrested by armed guards. Peter, who has taken the trouble to arm himself with a sword, fights back, and cuts off one of their assailants' ears with a sword. Jesus, unarmed, tells Peter to put his sword down, and surrenders. Which one would you follow into war? Shortly afterwards again, Jesus is falsely accused of blasphemy and sedition by the chief priests and then by Pilate. He refuses to answer them. Peter, three times, is asked true questions about his relationship with the prisoner Jesus, and lies in reply. Peter lives to fight another day. Jesus is crucified. Which one would you follow into war?

And yet, some thirty years on, as today's epistle shows, Peter is not only still following Jesus, the loser Jesus, but urging everyone to do so. Peter will eventually face execution for his loyalty to a man crucified half a lifetime before, and still he is seeking to persuade anyone he can, that they are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation". How? Through Jesus Christ. (*Continues over*)