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## THE BULLETIN - READINGS

15 April, Easter 3

### Collect for Easter 3

Almighty Father,  
who in your great mercy gladdened the disciples  
with the sight of the risen Lord:  
give us such knowledge of his presence with us,  
that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life  
and serve you continually in righteousness and truth;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

*(or)*

Risen Christ,  
you filled your disciples with boldness and fresh hope:  
strengthen us to proclaim your risen life  
and fill us with your peace,  
to the glory of God the Father.

### Acts 3:12-19

When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, 'You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over

and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.

‘And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out.

### **1 John 3:1-7**

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

### **Luke 24:36b-48: Jesus Appears to His Disciples**

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, ‘Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.’ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving

and still wondering, he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

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.' Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, 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, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.'

**Readings for 22 April, Easter 4, are:  
Acts 4:5-12; 1 John 3:16-24 John 10.11-18**

**When colour shall count no more** *by Rodney Nicholson*

Sunderland Point, a tiny village on the Lancashire coast cut off twice a day by the tide, is the home of Sambo's grave. Ever since 1736, but especially in recent years, visitors have placed flowers and pebbles in this windswept spot where a negro boy was given a kindly burial by his master, a ship's captain. Being unbaptised, he could not be laid to rest in the churchyard. In 1796 a retired Lancaster headmaster, the Revd James Watson, wrote a poem in Sambo's honour which was inscribed at his grave. The closing words run: "Then the great Judge his approbation finds, not on man's colour but his worth of heart".

Clearly there were enlightened people in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, yet lynchings of mainly black people still took place in the American South in the last century. Blacks could, without trial, be hung from a tree, sometimes being tortured as well, no doubt by white people who declared themselves Christians. One survey reckons that 3,959

black people were lynched in the 12 Southern States between 1877 and 1950.

America's segregation policies caused deep resentment. One flashpoint was 1st December 1955 when Rosa Parks refused to surrender her bus seat to a white man in Montgomery, Alabama. She was arrested and tried but then a boycott of the buses by black people, who were the main users, forced a change in the law. It also added weight to the Civil Rights' movement, whose most powerful advocate, the Revd Dr Martin Luther King, was assassinated 50 years ago this month.

Mr Watson's words at Sambo's grave were echoed by Martin Luther King's great speech in 1963: "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character." His call for racial justice opened the eyes of millions, just as opponents of apartheid in South Africa so roused the world's conscience that black majority rule under Nelson Mandela, also a Christian, finally became a reality in 1994.



Supposed Christians have sometimes missed the connection between the Lord's Prayer and racial justice. Yet we today have our blind spots, such as over the unjust deportation of some asylum seekers. "I have been to the mountain top and seen the promised land", declared King, fearful of his own death. The struggle must go on.