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EASTER SUNDAY B

31st March 2024

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Gathering words

Happy Easter!

Christ is risen – he is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

The Lord's day is here, the day when we remember that light is stronger than dark, hope is stronger than despair, love is stronger than hate.

Resurrection is all around me this day,

Loving God, help me to notice that, and see new life breaking through. Amen.

Easter hymns:

You might like to sing along, read the words or listen to one or more of these Easter hymns to help you enter the spirit of this season:

309 STF – See, what a morning, gloriously bright - [YouTube](#)

62 STF – Our God is an awesome God - [YouTube](#)

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313 STF – Thine be the glory - [YouTube](#)

305 STF – Low in the grave he lay - [YouTube](#)

10,000 Reasons – performed by the National Methodist Choir of Great Britain - [YouTube](#)

Opening Prayers

The day of resurrection is here – and Lord, I come to greet it.

On this day of celebration, I choose to turn aside for a moment, to notice your presence, O God of Easter.

[Hold a moment of stillness].

Thank you for this new day, for this spring season, for the sunshine on my back and the rain for the gardens,

Thank you for the community I am a part of, in my church, in my neighbourhood and connected across the world,

Thank you for the gift of Easter – the reminder that you have overcome the most difficult, most challenging of situations, and that you are right here with us in the midst of our own challenges.

Thank you, Easter God.

As we come in worship, Lord, we also recognise that I have fallen short of your glory. That I have done things I wish I had not done, and not taken opportunities I wish I had taken to share something of your gospel with the world around me.

Forgive me, I pray, Easter God.

And, even as I ask for your forgiveness, I know that you have already accepted me just as I am – that you love me and invite me to be a part of your Easter people here on earth.

I praise and thank you, Easter God. Amen.

You may now wish to say the Lord's Prayer in a version or translation with which you are familiar.

Reading: John 20:1-18 – [Click for reading](#)

Reflections on the reading

There is absolutely nothing normal about Easter. It should always be the most extraordinary of all days. Even though we've heard the story a hundred times and welcomed the risen Christ with song, in our hearts if not our mouths, we can never allow familiarity to be confused with normality. Even when we have endured a number of Easter days over the past few years that have meant a change of tradition and a different way of sharing that message.

Today's passage from John's Gospel does a brilliant job of making this point for us.

Jesus has repeatedly and passionately told his followers that his death will not be an ordinary death. Yet, when the unthinkable has happened and Jesus has been crucified, his followers take solace in the traditions of mourning.

We meet Mary Magdalene, early in the morning as she makes her journey to the tomb in which Jesus has been placed. We hear of her shock and upset as she discovers the tomb empty and her desperate flight to Peter and another of the disciples. Explaining to them what has happened, we can hear her confusion as the ordinary is disturbed and grief compounded. When the disciples arrive at the tomb they see for themselves, and finding the usual grave clothes that wrapped Jesus' body are empty. Even then, even with all they have been told and all that they can see, they still can't yet fathom the extraordinary thing has taken place.

After this, when Mary comes face to face with the risen Jesus, she still struggles at first to break through the conditioning of her mind. When Jesus speaks to her she first thinks he is simply the gardener. It's only when Jesus uses her name that the illusion is shattered and she begins to understand exactly how wonderful her situation has now become.

Once realisation dawns, Mary rushes to tell the other disciples the story of the risen Lord beginning a wave of hope and expectancy that reaches forward to us as Christ's church today.

So how then, are we to respond to the extraordinary events of Easter? What is God calling you to do?

I do believe, that the extraordinary events of Easter call us into an extraordinary response. A response where we are willing to sacrifice our lives to God each and every day. To see the power of God in everything around us, to be enthralled by his creation and to seek, always to build his kingdom. With that as our focus, even the things that we fear may be ordinary are transformed into the remarkable.

Easter is never 'ordinary'.

If you follow Christ, neither are you!

[Questions for pondering or sharing with a friend]

1. Where do you see the extraordinary power of Christ's resurrection in your life and the life of others around you?

2. What 'ordinary' things that you do could become extraordinary, if you consciously gave them over to God?¹

Closing hymn:

345 STF – And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood? - [YouTube](#)

Blessing

This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!

This is the day where Christians all over the world celebrate the victory of life over death. This is the day of possibility, of justice and joy, of hope and peace.

Come, Lord Jesus, and may I know something of your resurrection in my heart, in my life, in my community and in this world,

Through Jesus' risen name, I pray,

Amen.

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week Ahead

Monday 1st April

- Easter Monday is typically a Bank Holiday. Hopefully that means you have some space today to draw breath, to rest, to spend time with family or friends.
- Amongst the rhythms of today, find a way to notice. To notice something you might normally have missed or overlooked. To notice a flower, or a scent, or a turn of phrase a loved one uses. Notice something today, and take a moment to allow it to make you smile.
- Thank God, in that moment, for the small things.

Tuesday 2nd April

- Resurrection God,
Call my name in the garden,
That I might know you are close,
That I might know that you are calling me to follow you afresh, afresh, afresh. Amen.

Wednesday 3rd April

- Our friends in the Global Relationships Team have asked us to join with the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and Americans in praying for Haiti. You might like to look up on the news, to see what the latest news is, and/or you might like to use these words, written by Sandra Lopez, Partnership Coordinator:
- Almighty God,
We weep with our Haitian brothers and sisters and pray for international partners who are supporting Haiti in seeking a peaceful, democratic transition following the resignations of Ariel Henry, the interim president.

¹ Reflection written by Graeme Dutton

- We pray for the Methodist Church in Haiti, its Sunday services and other activities that have been affected by the violence that is stopping participants from gathering. May they find comfort in you during this time.
- In Jesus' name, Amen.

Thursday 4th April

- Prayer can be enriched by a connection to nature – sometimes even a physical connection with nature. If you are someone who regularly gardens or works on the land, then this won't feel strange to you, but if you don't have your own garden or don't regularly spend time in it, it might feel a little odd...
- At some point today, hold some soil in your hand. You might like to go outside and find somewhere where you can sit on or near the floor, or you may get a pot-plant and dig out a handful of the soil.
- Feel the earth between your fingers, let it run through your hands, allow your hands to feel the dirt.
- As you do so, pray this line from the Psalms: 'the earth is the Lord's and everything in it'. You might like to repeat the line over and over again.

Friday 5th April

- Loving God
This Easter Season, let us celebrate the resurrection of Jesus,
The Prince of Peace.
Let us share our celebration with loved ones,
Whether our communities gather in church rooms or zoom rooms,
Let us hold onto one another on this joyous day
And sing of the wonder of your love. Amen.

Saturday 6th April

- God of resurrection and new life,
We are moved by the power of your love for us.
That you would die for us,
So that we would be invited to dwell in your presence forever.
As we seek to honour the sacrifice of Jesus,
Give us wisdom and humility.
Send us out of this place,
With the joy of Easter on our tongue.
Let us worship your name,
So that all may hear. Amen.