

Christ Church, Ipswich

Sunday 17th April 2022

Easter Sunday All-age Worship

Good morning to you! Happy Easter! I hope you are well. It is wonderful to be able to share with you on this most special of days within the Christian year and as we worship together today, I pray that you will know the renewing, hope-filled presence of God as we celebrate and reflect on the resurrection of Jesus.

Let us join together in praising God this Easter Sunday:

Call to worship

Christ is risen!

Alleluia!

The Lord is risen!

He is risen indeed!

The Lord Jesus Christ is risen indeed!

And so we worship together this day
remembering once more the Good News of Easter,
rejoicing once more in the victory of Jesus
over sin and evil, darkness and death,
celebrating once more the triumphant message of the Resurrection:

New hope! New joy! New life!

The Lord is risen!

He is risen indeed!

A gathering prayer

Risen Lord,
in the stillness and wonder of this moment,
we hardly dare to believe that you are indeed alive!
Yet our hearts are filling with faith, hope and love,
and our souls are beginning to believe!
Wonderful Lord, we fall on our knees with thanksgiving. **Amen.**

A prayer of approach

Cosmic God,
your Son Jesus walked the earth as we do today,
and his life, death and resurrection free us to embrace
the fullness of life you offer to all that you have made.
In his name, we your Church, your family,
gather to celebrate this day,
to encourage one another,
to draw close to you –
glad to be alive, glad to worship you,
glad to sing out: **Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

R&S 232 Christ the Lord is risen today

1 Christ the Lord is risen today,
Alleluia!
 let creation join to say:
Alleluia!
 raise your joys and triumphs high,
Alleluia!
 sing, ye heavens, thou earth reply:
Alleluia!

2 Love's redeeming work is done,
 fought the fight, the battle won;
 lo! our sun's eclipse is o'er;
 lo! he sets in blood no more.

3 Vain the stone, the watch, the seal;
 Christ hath burst the gates of hell:
 death in vain forbids his rise;
 Christ hath opened paradise.

4 Lives again our glorious King;
 where, O death, is now thy sting?
 Dying once he all doth save;
 where's thy victory, boasting grave?

5 Soar we now where Christ hath led,
 following our exalted Head;
 made like him, like him we rise:
 ours the cross, the grave, the skies.

6 Hail the Lord of earth and heaven!
 Praise to thee by both be given:
 thee we greet triumphant now,
 hail, the Resurrection Thou!

Charles Wesley. (1707-88)

A prayer of adoration

Creator God, giver of life;
 Jesus Christ, Lord of life;
 Holy Spirit, pulse of life:
 we bring you our 'alleluias' and our thanks
 for the joy, the hope and the wonder
 of the Resurrection – which we celebrate today. **Amen.**

A prayer of confession

We are sorry, Lord, for the times when we stay in the tomb of our lack of belief and fill it with our fear.
Forgive us, and release us to be your witnesses in your world today.
 We are sorry for the times we are sceptical when others share the power of the Resurrection in their lives.
Forgive us, and release us to be your witnesses in your world today.
 We are sorry for the times when we live as if there were no Easter.
Forgive us, and release us to be your witnesses in your world today. Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

Jesus is alive! **Jesus is alive!**
 Death is overcome: **Jesus is alive!**
 He is your one true Son: **Jesus is alive!**
 We are freed from sin: **Jesus is alive!**
 Our new lives can begin: **Jesus is alive!**
 On this joyful Easter Day: **Jesus is alive!**
 So let us sing and dance and rejoice.
Jesus is alive! Amen.

A prayer of praise

Amazing God, we praise you that from the silence of an empty tomb,
 a message of joy has spread around the world.
 From the brutality of a death on a cross, healing love has touched the whole of creation.
 From the initial uncertainty of the first disciples, your Church has grown and reached out in faith to all.
 Thank you for Easter; thank you for life; thank you for everything. **Amen**

Easter Egg Hunt in the sanctuary for our children followed by a few words and a prayer

All-age Prayer

For raising Jesus from the dead:

glory to God this joyful Easter Day.

As we eat our Easter eggs:

glory to God this joyful Easter day.

For love to share with one another, today and every day:

glory to God this joyful Easter Day. Amen.

Action Song **As the sun rises on a new day**

*As the sun rises on a new day,
May our hearts say, 'God is good to us.'
As the sun rises on a new day,
May our songs say, 'You are faithful God.'*

*As the sun rises on a new day,
May our hearts say, 'God is good to us.'
As the sun rises on a new day,
May our songs say, 'We are grateful Lord.'*

1 Your loving kindness is new every morning,
Through every season and change.
Nothing can hinder the love you have for me,
Nothing will stop me from singing your praise!
As the sun rises on a new day...

2 Vaster than oceans is your love towards me,
More than I'll ever contain.
Goodness and mercy in every new morning,
Love never-ending for all of my days.
As the sun rises on a new day...

3 All of creation will tell of your glory,
Your love forever proclaimed.
Songs rising up, we'll awaken the morning,
Voices together declaring your praise!
As the sun rises on a new day...

Words and Music by Mark and Helen Johnson
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Easter Day Old Testament Reading: Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

A Song of Victory

¹ O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures for ever!

² Let Israel say,
'His steadfast love endures for ever.'

¹⁴ The Lord is my strength and my might;
he has become my salvation.

¹⁵ There are glad songs of victory in the tents of
the righteous:

'The right hand of the Lord does valiantly;
¹⁶ the right hand of the Lord is exalted;
the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.'

¹⁷ I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of the Lord.

¹⁸ The Lord has punished me severely,
but he did not give me over to death.

¹⁹ Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the Lord.

²⁰This is the gate of the Lord;
the righteous shall enter through it.

²¹I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.

²²The stone that the builders rejected

has become the chief cornerstone.

²³This is the Lord's doing;
it is marvellous in our eyes.

²⁴This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Easter Day Gospel Reading: Luke 24:1-12

The Resurrection of Jesus

24 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ²They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they went in, they did not find the body. ⁴While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. ⁶Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.' ⁸Then they remembered his words, ⁹and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹²But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

BPW 251 I know that my Redeemer lives!

1 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!

2 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 time of need.

3 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.

4 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)

Reflection

This Easter Sunday, we hear Luke's story of the Resurrection of Jesus. While the names may differ, all the Gospels agree that the first witnesses of the empty tomb were the women who followed Jesus to the cross, and then to his grave. The women come to honour Jesus in the only way left to them, that is to improve his grave with spices. Clearly, they weren't anticipating the resurrection, were they!? No wonder they were 'perplexed' to find that the body is missing and the tomb is empty. And what happens next is terrifying: 'suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them'. As the women are facing this fearful moment, the two men wearing what must have been like the most magnificent Hi-Viz clothing(!) remind them that Jesus had predicted he would rise again (Luke 9:22). They remembered Jesus' words and this no doubt led to a new understanding and experience of Jesus which went way beyond the Cross. They then hurry back into the city to tell the disciples and the rest of Jesus' followers that he has risen.

In some Christian traditions, Mary Magdalene has been called the 'apostle to the apostles', but clearly, she is not the only one. Really, all the women Luke lists in verse 10, 'Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women' could be called this, couldn't they? It is sad and rather strange that the apostles initially don't believe the women even though they've been following Jesus together all through his ministry; perhaps it's because women were not considered to be reliable witnesses under Jewish law. We will see that the women's faithfulness at the end of the Gospel even mirrors that of Elizabeth and Mary at the beginning. And throughout his Gospel, Luke consistently shows women, as well as men, proclaiming the good news of salvation for all in Christ. Now, while the Church has made some progress regarding the treatment of women, in many contexts there still remains much work to be done, and much change required for equality to be real.

and lasting. In fact, I am certain that working towards all being included and all being treated equal within the Church, remains a Gospel imperative. We the Church are called to challenge any and all prejudice within the church family and beyond, whether it be because of gender, race, sexuality, disability, nationality or for any other reasons. As we reflect further on the apostles' initial response to the women, perhaps we consider how sceptical we are when assessing or accepting people's experience of God? God often chooses those that we might not speak with. Are we prepared to listen to those we wouldn't expect to speak God's message? Who might that be? Who are the people in our community whose voices we might be tempted to ignore? Or those whose words we might carefully check out before believing them, just as Peter does? Thankfully, Peter is someone who clearly grew and changed a lot in this important area. In Acts 10:34, when speaking in Cornelius's home, Peter declares that 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality'. Let's also stay open to change and let's keep on growing when it comes to inclusivity and acceptance of others and their experiences of the divine.

Luke then tells us that Peter then goes and sees the empty tomb for himself. We hear that, bizarrely, 'then he went home, amazed at what had happened' (verse 12). We do not see him immediately bearing witness, as the women had. The women's reaction to hearing the good news is to go and tell the disciples and the others gathered with them. Peter's reaction is to be amazed but to go home! The story of the Emmaus Road occurs next, and it is only as that story ends that we hear that Peter has told the rest of Jesus' followers. I don't know, perhaps he needed time to process his amazement?

What about us? What is our reaction to hearing the good news of Jesus' resurrection? Are we good witnesses or do we keep it to ourselves? What prevents us from being witnesses today? Perhaps we think about being witnesses, mindful that, as Jim Friedrich, an Episcopalian priest, writer, and creative thinker astutely writes, the 'Resurrection isn't something we explain. It's something we live and breathe.' In light of this, maybe as we work to be witnesses, we consider how we are living, how we are praying and whether we are ready to take God's hope, healing, peace, light and vibrant life into this dark, warring and hurting world? As we once more approach the mystery of the empty tomb, perhaps like the women in Luke's story, God draws us away from the empty tomb to discover the risen Christ himself leading us into new ways of experiencing and loving the suffering and crucified Christ, and then encouraged and empowered by the Spirit, we celebrate the joy of Easter, we reflect on our own work as witnesses and we go out into the world to proclaim in word and deed the good news of Easter that:

Christ is risen!

Alleluia!

The Lord is risen!

He is risen indeed!

Amen.

A moment for reflection

R&S 250 The strife is o'er, the battle done

1 The strife is o'er, the battle done;
now is the Victor's triumph won;
O let the song of praise be sung:
Alleluia!

2 Death's mightiest powers have done their worst,
but Christ their legions has dispersed;
let shouts of praise and joy outburst:
Alleluia!

3 On the third day he rose again
glorious in majesty to reign;
O let us swell the joyful strain:
Alleluia!

4 He broke the ancient chains of hell;
the bars from heaven's high portals fell;
let hymns of praise his triumph tell:
Alleluia!

5 Lord, by the stripes which wounded thee,
from death's dread sting thy servants free,
that we may live, and sing to thee:
Alleluia!

Latin, 17th cent.
tr. Francis Pott (1832-1909) altd.*

Our prayers of intercession

Lord God, our hearts fill with joy today at the most wonderful news ever: Jesus is alive!

We thank you for all the signs of life that we see around us: sunshine, blossom on the trees, baby birds and animals, buds peeping through the ground; new life is blooming everywhere. Thank you for the smell of spring, the warmer days, the lighter nights all pointing towards the regeneration that comes from you.

Yours is the glory; risen, conquering Son.

Endless is the victory over death you've won.

Lord Jesus, thank you that you went to the cross for us. Thank you that you love us so much that you willingly suffered all the pain and horror so that we might have a relationship with God. We rejoice that the curtain of separation was torn in two as you died, reconciling us to God. Thank you for love beyond measure. For us.

Yours is the glory; risen, conquering Son.

Endless is the victory over death you've won.

Thank you, Lord, for the tremendous victory of the resurrection. Thank you for the hope, the joy, the fulfilment, the everlasting life that your rising brings. Words cannot fully express the amazing triumph of that silent moment in the garden when you once again began to breathe.

Yours is the glory; risen, conquering Son.

Endless is the victory over death you've won.

Lord, we thank you for signs of resurrection in our own lives: perhaps something new learnt, a chance for rest and relaxation, a new job, a new member of the family, a recovery. There are so many ways that you bring new growth into our lives. We pause now to thank you for special times that we have recently experienced...

Yours is the glory; risen, conquering Son.

Endless is the victory over death you've won.

Lord Jesus, as the women came to the tomb in sorrow, their eyes full of tears, we are aware of so much sorrow still in our world. We lift to you now all the places where conflict exists – between nations, between factions, between families, between partners. We bring to you our suffering planet: where the beauty you have created is being squeezed by humanity's selfishness and greed. We bring to you all those who are in pain: those we know and love who are sick, full of sorrow, loneliness or despair.

A moment for us to pray for one another and to bring our own prayers before God.

Lord, we deeply desire that your resurrected presence will fill those people and places of pain and redeem them, bringing the new life that is so dearly needed. Touch every heart with your eternal love, filling each seemingly hopeless situation with the promise of resurrected, everlasting hope.

Yours is the glory; risen, conquering Son.

Endless is the victory over death you've won.

Lord, the news of your rising was so amazing that even your closest friends struggled to believe it at first. We pray for all those we know who struggle to believe and trust in you. We ask you to help them ponder the evidence, just like Peter did, and to think seriously about what they see. Help us to show them, by our joy at your resurrection, that new life in Jesus is for everyone, for ever.

Yours is the glory; risen, conquering Son.

Endless is the victory over death you've won.

As we celebrate your victory, Lord, go before us this week into every situation we face. Give us new eyes to encounter your freshness and new life. Help us to remember that your resurrection is for ever, not just for one day. Thank you for being alive in us now. Breathe your Spirit into our hearts this week so that we may be faithful witnesses to all that you are and all that you have done.

Yours is the glory; risen, conquering Son.

Endless is the victory over death you've won.

Lord, on this most special of days, we once again say thank you with all of our being.

Thank you, Lord Jesus. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

R&S 247 Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son

1 Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won;
angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave-clothes where thy body lay.

*Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won.*

2 Lo! Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb;
lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and gloom;
let the church with gladness, hymns of triumph sing,
for her Lord now liveth, death hath lost its sting:

3 No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of Life;
life is naught without thee: aid us in our strife;
make us more than conquerors, through thy deathless love;
bring us safe through Jordan to thy home above:

Edmund Budry (1854-1932) Tr. R. Birch Hoyle (1875-1939)

A sending out prayer

Risen Lord, you always go before us
– preparing the way, leading us further along your path of life.
Today of all days, there is no more fear.
We praise and adore you! **Alleluia!** Amen.

The Blessing

May the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be upon us and all those we love,
this day and always, Amen.

The Grace

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all evermore. Amen.**

Notices

Just a couple of notices if I may:

I am taking some annual leave next week, returning to work on Tuesday 26th April.

I am pleased to say that the Revd Dr Simon Perry will be leading our worship next Sunday.

Happy Easter!

Every blessing,

Neil