

1. Preparation

O Lord, open our lips
**and our mouth shall proclaim your
 praise.**

In your resurrection, O Christ,
let heaven and earth rejoice. Alleluia.

Blessed are you, Lord God of our
 salvation,
 to you be praise and glory for ever.
 As once you ransomed your people from
 Egypt
 and led them to freedom in the promised
 land,
 so now you have delivered us from the
 dominion of darkness
 and brought us into the kingdom of your
 risen Son.
 May we, the first fruits of your new
 creation,
 rejoice in this new day you have made,
 and praise you for your mighty acts.
 Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy
 Spirit.

Blessed be God for ever.

Christ our passover has been sacrificed for
 us: so let us celebrate the feast,
 not with the old leaven of corruption and
 wickedness: but with the unleavened bread
 of sincerity and truth.

Christ once raised from the dead dies no
 more: death has no more dominion over
 him.

In dying he died to sin once for all:
 in living he lives to God.

See yourselves therefore as dead to sin:
 and alive to God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Christ has been raised from the dead: the
 first fruits of those who sleep.

For as by man came death: by man has
 come also the resurrection of the dead;

For as in Adam all die: even so in Christ
 shall all be made alive.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son and
 to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the
 beginning is now and shall be for ever.
 Amen.**

The night has passed, and the day lies
 open before us; let us pray with one heart
 and mind.

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
 so may the light of your presence, O God,
 set our hearts on fire with love for you;
 now and for ever.

Amen.

2. Psalm 118

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
 his mercy endures for ever.

**Let Israel now proclaim, 'His mercy
 endures for ever.'**

The Lord is my strength and my song, and
 he has become my salvation.

**Joyful shouts of salvation sound from
 the tents of the righteous:**

'The right hand of the Lord does mighty
 deeds; the right hand of the Lord raises up;
 the right hand of the Lord does mighty
 deeds.'

**I shall not die, but live and declare the
 works of the Lord.**

The Lord has punished me sorely, but he has not given me over to death.

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

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

I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me and have become my salvation.

The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

This is the day that the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Prayer:

Saving God,
open the gates of righteousness,
that your pilgrim people may enter
and be built into a living temple
on the cornerstone of our salvation,
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

3. Reading

A reading from the book of Acts

34 Then Peter began to speak to them: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, 35but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. 37That message spread

throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: 38how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; 40but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, 41not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. 43All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'

Responses

Death is swallowed up in victory.

Where, O death, is your sting?

Christ is risen from the dead,
the first fruits of those who have fallen
asleep.

Death is swallowed up in victory.

The trumpet will sound
and the dead shall be raised.

Where, O death, is your sting?

We shall not all sleep,
but we shall be changed.

Death is swallowed up in victory.

Where, O death, is your sting?

4. Gospel Reading

**Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus
according to Mark**

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of

James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' 4When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. 5As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. 6But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. 7But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' 8So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

[Mark 16.1-8]

After a Reflective Silence

This is the Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you, O Christ !

Scripture quotations are from The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible © 1989

5. Sermon

What does Easter mean for us this year when again as last year, we cannot share in communion together, when we can't meet as church communities to share in joyful music, we can't gather together to decorate the church with white flowers and green foliage signifying the new life of Easter, we can't share the peace together, we might struggle to really

experience the joy of Easter that church communities have worked together to share in the past.

Our Gospel reading from Mark tells us of the terror and amazement that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary experienced when they heard the good news that Jesus was risen from the dead. This account doesn't give us any encounter between them and Jesus and so we can imagine the roller coaster of emotions that they had experienced over the events of the previous few days and why they were both terrified and amazed. They had suffered the anguish of seeing Jesus crucified and known the loss of hope and the grief of losing someone who was so dear to them, and then they were maybe daring to hope that something – a glimmer of hope, that Jesus had not failed was maybe just beginning to enter their imaginations.

Perhaps the way we have to celebrate Easter today is actually more realistic like this. The followers of Jesus wanted to return, no doubt, to the old familiar relationship that they had had with him and yet they could see that that was going to be impossible; Jesus was far more than they had thought possible; this event was beyond their comprehension and life would never be the same again. They had lost the familiar certainties that they had had. Initially when Jesus who they saw as a friend, a teacher, a miracle worker had been put to death, inexplicably - as far as they were concerned, but then as he appeared before them resurrected they were having to rethink everything that they knew, all their expectations now had to be revised in light of these circumstances.

So what about us in our circumstances?

Many of us lonely, isolated, perhaps anxious or fearful or just sad about the loss that communities around the world are experiencing – loss of life, loss of contacts, loss of incomes and jobs, perhaps loss of hope. And yet in the midst of this we are seeing new things – we are seeing communities coming together to look out for the vulnerable amongst them, we are seeing small business stretching themselves to provide solutions to some of the problems that have arisen as a result of the virus; locally made hand sanitisers, local adapted diving masks to provide protection from the virus, locally food producers working to get their products to customers, health workers working above and beyond to ensure that they can save as many lives as possible, and people following guidelines to help to limit the spread of the illness – or put another way we are seeing love in action. As we learn to live in new ways we are learning to see things differently and we are being given an opportunity to re-evaluate what is important. People stuck at home are getting creative and extending themselves and sharing their creativity. But also people are learning to really appreciate our health service, our local business, our shops and farmers, our schools who are looking after children for keyworkers even over the Easter holidays. We are beginning to recognise that we need each other and that although we can't be together we are still very much community.

That was the reality that happened as Jesus rose from the dead, although he was not present with his followers in the same way, he had opened up a new way of looking at life and death, that there is hope beyond this life and a new way of being in contact with him in spirit. These are themes that are explored in the readings

from Easter to Ascension and Pentecost.

And so although we cannot be physically present with people we can be even more connected by telephone and may have more authentic conversations, get to know each other better and have the opportunity to experience kind gestures of receiving care or delivering supplies to someone who needs them in self-isolation.

Jesus was going to be now available to more people than he had been when he was physically present before his resurrection, he wasn't limited by the normal limitations of human existence but could be present to people in spirit. As he is for us now, we too can experience the joy of the disciples as we know that death is not the end but the beginning of eternal life. And yet as we await the fullness of God's kingdom we will still experience loss and grief when someone dies much as those disciples did at the loss of Jesus.

And yes in the future we will be able to celebrate our Christian seasons together in churches but perhaps we need to learn from this experience, to learn to see how we can provide a welcome to all, how we can learn to show love in action within our church communities and beyond, to celebrate our diversity and unitedness, our individuality as a small community and yet our link to the global community too. That we are part of something small but also part of something so big. This virus isn't the only challenge that we face as church or communities or as a world- but maybe we can reflect about what we have learned about living differently and how that might influence us and how we act going forward.

But most of all I hope you reading this sermon now, that all of us at home, that we can learn to trust God, to know that we

never were or are utterly in control of our lives, but that even in the darkest circumstances Jesus is always the light of the world, a light that shines in the darkness and a light that no darkness can quench. Jesus by his resurrection reveals to us the hope of eternal life, which we symbolise at Easter by lighting a candle, a new Pascal candle on Easter Sunday which we use until next Easter to remind us that his death and resurrection changes everything and that we are redeemed and set free. So as we, like those first disciples, have within ourselves a mixture of emotions and reactions let us remind ourselves to hold on in every situation to that light and that hope and the joy that Jesus is with us, that Jesus understands the darkest experiences that we go through because he has been through them too. Let us remember that joy is not the absence of sorrow but the presence of God. May you know God's presence with you particularly at this Easter time and may you know the joy of his salvation. Amen.

6. The Benedictus

**The Lord is risen from the tomb
who for our sakes hung upon the tree.
Alleluia.**

Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, who has come to his people and set them free.

He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour, born of the house of his servant David.

Through his holy prophets God promised of old to save us from our enemies, from the hands of all that hate us,

To show mercy to our ancestors, and to remember his holy covenant.

This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham: to set us free from the hands of our enemies,

Free to worship him without fear, holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life.

And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,

To give his people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of all their sins.

In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us,

To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,

and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Luke 1.68-79

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

**The Lord is risen from the tomb
who for our sakes hung upon the
tree. Alleluia.**

7. Prayers

On this day that the Lord has made, let us pray for the people he has redeemed.

That we may live as those who believe in the triumph of the cross:

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer

That all people may receive the good news of his victory:

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer

That those born to new life in the waters
of baptism
may know the power of his resurrection:
Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer

That those who suffer pain and anguish
may find healing and peace in the wounds
of Christ:
Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer

That in the undying love of Christ
we may be united with all who have died
in the faith of Christ:
Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer

Let us commend the world, in which
Christ rose from the dead,
to the mercy and protection of God.
Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer

Merciful Father,
**accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

8. Collect for Today

Lord of all life and power,
who through the mighty resurrection of
your Son overcame the old order of sin
and death to make all things new in him:
grant that we, being dead to sin and alive
to you in Jesus Christ,
may reign with him in glory;
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be
praise and honour, glory and might, now
and in all eternity. **Amen.**

9. The Lord's Prayer

Rejoicing in God's new creation,
as our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

10. The Conclusion

May the risen Christ grant us the joys of
eternal life.

Amen.

Let us bless the Lord. Alleluia, alleluia.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia.