



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 4 APRIL 2021
EASTER DAY

COLLECT

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.

Psalm 118.1-2 + 14-24

- 1 O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; ♦
his mercy endures for ever.
- 2 Let Israel now proclaim, ♦
'His mercy endures for ever.'
- 14 The Lord is my strength and my song, ♦
and he has become my salvation.
- 15 Joyful shouts of salvation ♦
sound from the tents of the righteous:
- 16 '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.'
- 17 I shall not die, but live ♦
and declare the works of the Lord.
- 18 The Lord has punished me sorely, ♦
but he has not given me over to death.
- 19 Open to me the gates of righteousness, ♦
that I may enter and give thanks to the Lord.
- 20 This is the gate of the Lord; ♦
the righteous shall enter through it.
- 21 I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me ♦

and have become my salvation.

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

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

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

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Acts 10.34-43

34 Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36 You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. 37 That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: 38 how 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. 39 We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; 40 but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, 41 not 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. 42 He 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. 43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

John 20.1-18

1 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. 2 So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." 3 Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. 4 The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, 7 and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; 9 for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. 10 Then the disciples returned to their homes. 11 But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; 12 and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. 13 They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." 14 When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?"

Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). 17 Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" 18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

For this special festival day, we have an Easter letter from Bishop Sarah to share with you:

'Alone Together' ~

Our home sits on a main road running into the town and it has along it some shops and offices, a Further Education College, a school and the crematorium as well as numerous other houses. From the window of my study, I can usually see cars, vans and people moving backwards and forwards, busy about their daily lives.

During the lockdowns of the pandemic over the past year the human and vehicle traffic outside my window has varied enormously from the almost deserted, except for traffic to the crematorium, to the now building busyness of young people on the way to college, parents taking their children to school and people driving into work and the constant stream of delivery drivers who have supported and provided for our nation during this most challenging of years.

For me it has been incredibly important to hold on to the reality that although many share a sense of isolation at this time, apart from family, friends and colleagues, because we are made for community, we have found ways to make connections and to share in the experience together - we might be alone, but we are alone together.

We have joined with our faith community online for worship and prayer, we have had meetings, conferences, school lessons, lectures and social events whilst sitting at our desks and we have joined in exercise classes, cookery courses and quizzes, among many other social activities on screen. We have been alone together.

However, we know that for many, especially those without access to technology, the isolation has been more keenly felt. Faith communities among many others, have been active in reaching out to those who are more isolated, with doorstep visits, deliveries of service and prayer leaflets, food parcels and medication. We have been alone together.

During this Holy Week in the Christian Church and now as we celebrate Easter, as Christians we hold on to the promise of Jesus' words to his disciples after the resurrection: *'I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'*

We are not alone, but always in relationship with God, who never leaves us or forsakes us, as we hear promised in scripture. Even if we are physically alone, we are alone together.

This is particularly important as we share the good news of God's love for the world, shown to us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. In this time of continuing uncertainty, even though we see the government 'roadmap' set out before us, we almost feel that we cannot trust ourselves to be hopeful, in case our worst fears are realised. But the Easter message is a message of good news, of light in the darkness of hope out of despair, of the transforming power of love.

We see that reflected clearly in our reading today from the gospel of John. We see Mary Magdalene, at the tomb of Jesus, caught up in her own emotions, unable even to recognise Jesus when he appears to her. It is only when Jesus speaks to Mary that she recognises his voice. As he speaks her name her world is transformed - the one who was dead is alive and she cannot wait to tell the others: "*I have seen the Lord.*"

In scripture we hear the promise: "*Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name and you are mine.*" (Isaiah 49:16.)

God knows your name too, it is written on the palm of his hand, and his promise is for you to claim. Even when we feel alone, we are alone together with God and as children of his family.

May I wish you a blessed Easter,
Bishop Sarah