



The Good Shepherd
Four Marks

Responding to God's Love

Easter Sunday, 4th April 2021

The paper-version Service

Hallelujah, He is risen – He is risen indeed, Hallelujah!

To Begin: Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe, light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service set out below.



Opening Prayer: Glorious God you demonstrate both the seriousness of sin and the extent of your love and mercy in the cross. Thank you for your kindness and grace to us, help us to receive your forgiveness today. Majestic King you show your incomparable power in the resurrection, help us walk forwards in new life, renewed hope and your power, to the praise and glory of your name. **Amen**

Song:

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...

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

Thine be the glory...

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

Thine be the glory...

Read: John 12: 12-19

Risen! A summary of the talk given by Howard Wright.

'... while it was still dark, ...'

I much prefer the daylight and enjoy getting up when it's already light. We rise early for Helen's work and were beginning to enjoy waking with the light, but the clocks have gone forwards and messed it up for a few weeks.

Mary, and, as we know from the other Gospels, her companions, head to the tomb whilst it's still dark. This Easter Sunday in Jerusalem the sun rises at 6.25am, but they would have been well on their way by then.

Why so early? The Sabbath, the weekly lockdown, had ended the previous evening and this was the first moment to properly anoint the body for it's burial. But most likely they simply couldn't sleep, such was the trauma of their experience: the loss of their hope in the person of Jesus.

Jesus had promised so much, and delivered on plenty, he'd healed and even raised others from the dead, all delivered with irrefutable divine power, reinforced with integrity and humility, and wrapped with gentleness, kindness and such love. But now he was gone, how did this happen, how was it possible – how did he let this happen.

It was dark literally, physically but also emotionally and spiritually.

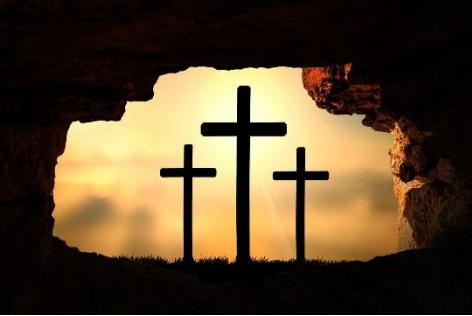
We might relate to this darkness. Many have struggled in the lockdowns and pandemic, and there have been other life issues which have been made worse by our disconnection from others.

We've missed celebrations, significant events, births and birthdays, weddings and anniversaries, and most awfully funerals, have passed by. Many of us have given up on the news, the thousands of refugees, persecuted, and oppressed. The pandemic ripping lives apart in the shanty towns of Brazil and much of South America, and now, again, North America. The climate and wildlife crises unfolding before our eyes, to which we now add piles of plastic PPE waste, including discarded face-coverings. And nation's politicians behaving like some horrific reality T.V. show arguing like children in a school playground – 'it's my vaccine, give it to me.' 'No, I saw it first.'

It is still dark, how did this happen, how was it possible – how did it he let this happen?

In Jesus' death turning to life, everything changes. The dawn brings light to dispel the darkness, hope to lift the despair, joy to transcend the grief and peace to fill the emptiness.

Have you grasped this? Let me read that again: *In Jesus' death turning to life, everything changes. The dawn bring light to dispel the darkness, hope to lift the despair, joy to transcend the grief and peace to fill the emptiness.*



Arriving at the tomb, the stone was gone – the Greek word implies, tossed aside – ‘discarded’ if you like. The stone is estimated to have weighed 1½ tons – it was a major barrier to our access to the tomb – it was removed to let the light and us in, not to let Jesus out!

Something has begun, but neither the women and nor the later arriving men are sure what it is.

Mary didn't grasp what had happened, (v.2) *'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!'* and neither did Peter, and his friend. (v.9) *'They still did not understand from*

Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.'

But later they did get it: Read Peter's words in 1 Peter 1:3-4a. And read the words John, almost certainly the 'other' disciple, wrote: 1 John 1:1-2.

The sun rose, and the physical darkness seeped away. Jesus rose, and the emotional and spiritual darkness was blasted away.

Mary, Peter, John, and all the disciples, including us today, needed/need a new encounter with Jesus to receive all that the resurrection had achieved.

How dark is it for us today? Have we grasped the reality of the resurrection? Read what Paul would later write, Romans 8:31-39.

The physical resurrection of Jesus Christ changes everything – including us and our circumstances. Grasp it today, allow it to transform you today and live in this new life today, sharing this news with others, as we prepare for the day when we will be completely changed – fully resurrected, face to face with Jesus.

As Paul again would write: *'For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.'* (Philippians 1:21).

Prayers: *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:4-6)*



- Pray for this day, and the coming week.
- Pray for justice, mercy, peace, and hope.
- Pray for individuals, for neighbours, for family and friends.
- Pray for the Church.

Collect: Easter Sunday. 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.**



The Lord's Prayer: 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.**

Blessing: God the Father, by whose love Christ was raised from the dead, open to us who believe the gates of everlasting life. God the Son, who in bursting the grave has won a glorious victory, give us joy as you share the Easter faith. God the Holy Spirit, whom the risen Lord breathed into his disciples, empower you and fill us with Christ's peace. And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

The Notices: We are now holding ticketed and socially distanced services in the building on Sundays at 9.30am. Further information on our website or by ringing our vicar, Howard.

If you know of others who would like to receive this, or you would rather not receive it; or if you find yourself isolated and not able to get neighbours, friends, or family to help, then ring Howard, 01420 563344.

