

A banner illustration for an Easter Sunday service. It depicts a desert landscape at sunrise or sunset. In the foreground, three camels are walking from left to right. In the middle ground, there is a small structure, possibly a tomb, and several palm trees. In the background, three crosses are visible on a hill, and a large sun is rising or setting on the horizon. A small bird is flying in the sky.

EASTER SUNDAY SERVICE



12th April 2020

Service Leader: Revd Michael Whitfield

(He is risen indeed)



Introduction

Good Morning and welcome to this church family gathering to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus the Christ. We may be socially distanced but we are together in spirit. Although for many, celebrations are difficult, for Christians it is a Joyful Eastertide, when through the life death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, Love defeats hate - Hope defeats fear - Sacrifice defeats greed - Mercy defeats might - Life defeats death.

Hymns are provided in this service in order that you might want to sing them or just take this opportunity to read the lyrics. I have crafted the prayers of intercession in such a way that you take inspiration for you own prayers from the biddings provided.

Towards the end of the service I have made provision to 'celebrate the Lord's Supper' - this is optional but if you wish to participate please have some bread and wine or a drink of your choosing (water is OK) ready beforehand. If you choose to omit this part please skip to the closing hymn.

I am sorry I cannot be with you physically. May the Lord's blessing be upon you all.

So Let us Worship God

L The Lord is Risen

R He is Risen Indeed

PRAYER

Let us pray...

Almighty God, in your great mercy you made glad the disciples with the sight of the risen Lord. Give us such knowledge of his presence with us, that we may be strengthened and sustained even in our own difficult times by his risen life, and serve you in righteousness and truth. Amen



HYMN – Christ the Lord is risen today

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Christ the Lord is risen today, <i>Alleluia!</i>
let creation join to say: <i>Alleluia!</i>
raise your joys and triumphs high, <i>Alleluia!</i>
sing, ye heavens; thou earth, reply: <i>Alleluia!</i> | 4 Lives again our glorious King; <i>Alleluia!</i>
where, O death, is now thy sting? <i>Alleluia!</i>
Dying once, he all doth save; <i>Alleluia!</i>
where's thy vict'ry, boasting grave? <i>Alleluia!</i> |
| 2 Love's redeeming work is done, <i>Alleluia!</i>
fought the fight, the battle won; <i>Alleluia!</i>
lo! our sun's eclipse is o'er; <i>Alleluia!</i>
lo! he sets in blood no more. <i>Alleluia!</i> | 5 Soar we now where Christ hath led, <i>Alleluia!</i>
following our exalted Head; <i>Alleluia!</i>
made like him, like him we rise: <i>Alleluia!</i>
ours the cross, the grave, the skies. <i>Alleluia!</i> |
| 3 Vain the stone, the watch, the seal; <i>Alleluia!</i>
Christ hath burst the gates of hell: <i>Alleluia!</i>
death in vain forbids his rise; <i>Alleluia!</i>
Christ hath opened paradise. <i>Alleluia!</i> | 6 Hail the Lord of earth and heaven! <i>Alleluia!</i>
Praise to thee by both be given: <i>Alleluia!</i>
thee we greet triumphant now, <i>Alleluia!</i>
hail, the Resurrection Thou! <i>Alleluia!</i> |

Charles Wesley

PRAYER

Light fills our eyes risen Jesus on this Easter day... We celebrate your resurrection with songs of joy and proclaim your Easter presence in every corner of your creation...

Let a new day begin for your world - Let the smallest flower and largest star announce the news that death is overcome by life and all things are made new... Let private grief and public tragedy be not ignored but, through your Friday pain, be gathered up in your eternal victory...

But, risen Jesus, even as we celebrate your resurrection, we know that we've not always lived as Easter people - as those who are loved, forgiven and set free – We've allowed ourselves to be imprisoned by tradition, captivated by habit, limited by fear...

So Lord, let each of us now, no matter what our age or skill leave all our burdens at your empty tomb and from this day begin a resurrection journey, a pilgrimage of joy that starts and ends in worship – for you are worthy to receive all blessing, honour, glory and power for ever and ever... 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.
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



The Lord is risen – **He is risen indeed** AMEN

READING – John 20: 1 - 18

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.

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.'

Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself.

Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; 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. 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.'

When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?'

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.'

Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). 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."'

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.



ADDRESS

This text from John is probably one of the most go-to passages for Easter, and one I have read many times. As I was preparing to write this address, one phrase, which had never quite captured my attention before, stood out for me and I felt I had to address it today

The reading tells the story of Mary Magdalene going to the tomb of Jesus early on the first day of the week, and then the text says -- "**While it was still dark...**"

I know it was in all likelihood meant by John to be only a reference to the time of day - but for me it opened my imagination to a deeper understanding of the text, especially at this time when for many it seems we are in dark times...

Mary had been with Jesus all the way - She had seen lives made new - bodies healed - and eyes opened. She had heard the complaining of the disciples and the criticism of the religious leaders, and saw how the crowds adored him and the rulers hated him...

Mary stood by the cross as they killed him, and her heart was broken, she had seen the adoration of the people when they entered the city of Jerusalem that last time - and their hostility when they stood before Pilate at the end of the week.

Now it was all over. She may have thought, "The least I can do is anoint the body with spices - Everyone deserves a proper burial, which had not been possible until now. Jesus had been hurriedly buried in a borrowed grave with no ceremony, no eulogy, and no thanksgiving for his life because it was time to go home and prepare a kind of lock-down – the Sabbath. Her heart was heavy and in her soul, "...it was still dark."

The kind of lock-down in this passage is very different from the one we are experiencing, theirs will be over in 24 hours and life will be back to normal for most, but not for Mary or any of the other followers of Jesus. The disciples had already begun to practice self-isolation, locked away in an upper room and for them too 'it was still dark'

Many of us may be experiencing that empty forlorn feeling right now. The loss of freedom to go out or enjoy the company of others, the knowledge that a loved one, a friend, a colleague is ill or may have died.

Funerals are being hurried, no ceremony, no eulogy, no thanksgiving for their lives. Others may be struggling to cope without being able to hug parents, children, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren.

Many may be living in fear knowing family members and friends are at risk of catching this virus which may have terrible consequences. Some may be coming to terms with the knowledge that they will never see certain loved ones ever again.

Today our hearts are heavy and within 'it is very dark'.

Like Mary, many of us may be wondering "what next". Mary's belief was in tatters, the one who had made life worth living had gone, just a head full of memories about the journey they had shared, when Jesus brought the light into their world.

It had been easy to believe in the light, Jesus had brought the sunshine, but now there was climate change. For us too it's hard to believe in the dark times – life has suddenly changed, a cloud is over the whole world and we struggle to believe.

Even when she thought it was all over Mary wanted to cling to Jesus, she kept asking "where have they taken my Lord" even while 'it was still dark' and even though she couldn't understand it all, Jesus was still the only one to bring light.

Anyone can walk in the sunshine - only the faithful can walk in the dark. In fact, if you are human, you will have some darkness, No one has all sunshine - just remember sunshine alone produces a desert, not a garden.

However, a close examination of the text reveals something helpful. When it was yet dark... God was at work on Mary's behalf, God was making a way where there was no way. Have no doubt about it, when things get tough, and they do, it does not mean that God has abandoned us. When the darkness comes, God is still working on our behalf.

Mary didn't leave Jesus or deny him. She remained faithful to him while waiting for the light, and God did not leave Mary – God remained faithful to her. Every Easter morning, there are people who are in darkness, but we don't need to feel alone or abandoned - we have not been abandoned by God. On that first Easter day, darkness turned into light, sorrow turned into Joy, the Good News turned into Great News, and Death turned into Life. Alleluia.

Mary's problem – the only one to make her feel she had any worth was dead, not only dead but had disappeared, she was not able to say her final farewells – the empty tomb reflects the gut wrenching emptiness she feels inside.

Many at this time will be resonating with Mary and her feelings. Big numbers of people are dying and although funerals are being held, restrictions means that many will not be able to say their farewells and it will seem as if the loved one has disappeared. In the depths of darkness some may fear that God too has disappeared.

While Mary is still weeping, Christ suddenly appears from behind her - She sees the object of her concern, but does not recognize him - Jesus comes to her with great love and gentleness and calls her name – and Mary responds.

At the tomb, nothing could pierce her darkness, not grave clothes or the singing angels - But when Jesus calls her name, she responds. God in Jesus is piercing her darkness, God has been with her all along but her darkness prevented her from knowing this, she is directed by Jesus to tell the others so that they too might be rescued from the darkness of their distress.

We need to realize that in our most difficult situations, God is working on our behalf even if we don't know it at the time. God is working to bring light and to dispel our dark situations - The good news is not only that Jesus was raised from the tomb, but the character of God is revealed in Jesus as light and love.

Mary's despair turned to joy when Jesus calls her name and her memories come flooding back, just the sound of his voice is enough to remind her of all he was and still is even though she cannot touch him. Those who are in darkness now will, with the help of the Spirit, be reunited with those memories which will turn the darkness into light and once again celebrate all our loved ones have meant to us even those we can no longer touch.

It might not be easy for us to rush out and tell others this wonderful news but there may be ways in which we can encourage others to look for the light at the end of the proverbial darkness using the power of technology. To proclaim that Jesus still lives, death had been defeated, no longer must we live in darkness. The Lord is Risen – He is Risen indeed. Alleluia.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

*At this point we pause to think of and pray for others and ourselves. Below are some topics that you might want to consider but feel free to use your own. There is no limit to the length of time you spend in this section it can be a long or as short as you think is right for you. You might also like to include some silence. If you wish, the following phrase is an appropriate end to each petition. **Risen Lord, hear our prayers***

Let us pray...

Dear Jesus, we thank you that you are our friend who is alive and whom we can talk to... Please be with everybody today in our homes and community, and around the world at this difficult and challenging time, as we try to celebrate that you are risen and present with all your people...

Risen Lord, hear our prayers

Risen Lord, we lift to your healing care

Those who are scared.

Those who are sick.

Those who are weak.

and especially those struggling with Coronavirus.

and those who haven't any friends or family to help them.

Risen Lord, hear our prayers



Risen Lord, we lift to your tender care

Those who work in the emergency services:

Doctors, Nurses, Hospital staff, Paramedics, Chemists,
Police Officers, Firefighters, Rescue Services.

Risen Lord, hear our prayers

Risen Lord we lift to your providing care

All those who still working to provide for essential needs:

Shop workers, Delivery workers including postmen/women, Refuse Workers,
Bus/Train/Airport/Taxi operators,
Good neighbours, Carers.

Risen Lord, hear our prayers

Risen Lord we lift to your loving care

our families

our friends

ourselves

Risen Lord, hear our prayers

AMEN

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S SUPPER

Today is the day of promise - Today is the day when our hopes find their focus - Today is the day when your cross stands empty and we see the stone rolled from your tomb... Today is the day when women lead the way, simply believing, simply hoping.

Today is the day when all creation groans in anticipation of the transformation which your resurrection promises... So come, eat, drink and rejoice - for Christ is risen from the dead.



HYMN – An upper room did our Lord prepare (Tune O Waly Waly)

- 1 An Upper Room did our Lord prepare for those he loved until the end: and his disciples still gather there to celebrate their Risen Friend.
- 2 A lasting gift Jesus gave his own – to share his bread, his loving cup; whatever burdens may bow us down, he by his cross shall lift us up.
- 3 And after Supper he washed their feet for service, too, is sacrament. In him our joy shall be made complete – sent out to serve, as he was sent.
- 4 No end there is! We depart in peace, he loves beyond the uttermost: in every room in our Father's house he will be there as Lord and Host.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

At Easter, we see the agony of Good Friday, when God died, when God was left hanging on a cross of wood...

At Easter, we see the humiliation of the most lovely, despised and rejected, scourged and crucified, as your children suffer still...

Yet in that cruellest of agonies we find our hope and our joy... In crumpled cloths and a rolled-away stone we see the buds of new life and claim your promise...

So at this time when we are celebrating Easter very differently than usual and although isolated within our homes we are united with all your people worldwide as we take the bread and cup of your sacrament and sacrifice.

In this sacrament we remember, we look back to your death and resurrection. In this sacrament we look forward in eager anticipation of the time when all things shall be born again...

For on the night of his betrayal, the night when even love and friendship failed, Jesus took a piece of bread and he gave thanks... Facing death, Jesus gave thanks, and offered the bread to the friends who had failed him and who would fail him.

'Take and eat. This is my body - I give it freely to you, Remember me when you break bread.'

(Take the bread you have prepared and eat after which the following words may be said)

Eating this bread, we share in the death of Jesus, in the pain of the world, in the hope of resurrection - and we Remember Him.



Then after supper, he lifted a cup of wine... Again he gave thanks in the midst of his sorrow and passed it around the company...

'Drink this, all of you - For in this wine is my promise to you and to all the world, sealed in my blood.'

(Take the Cup you have prepared and drink after which the following words may be said)

In taking this cup, we share in the passion of Jesus, in all the sorrow of the world, in the hope of resurrection - and we Remember Him.



Today, at Easter, as at every celebration of the Lord's Supper, we recall with awe and wonder the love that could not die, and we give our hearty thanks.

And so we ask that as we eat bread and drink wine together, your spirit will descend upon this sacrament and upon those who gather in your name, that all may be blessed and be a blessing as we remember the promise and look forward in hope... Amen



HYMN

- 1 Crown him with many crowns,
the lamb upon his throne;
hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns
all music but its own.
Awake, my soul and sing
of him who died for me,
and hail him as thy chosen King
through all eternity.
- 2 Crown him the Son of God,
before the world's began:
and ye, who tread where he hath trod,
crown him the Son of Man;
who every grief hath known
that wrings the human breast,
and takes and bears them for his own,
that all in him may rest.
- 3 Crown him the Lord of life,
who triumphed o'er the grave,
and rose victorious in the strife
for those he came to save:
his glories now we sing
who died, and rose on high;
who died eternal life to bring,
and lives that death may die.
- 4 Crown him the Lord of Love!
Behold his hand and side,
rich wounds, yet visible above
in beauty glorified.
All hail, redeemer, hail!
for thou hast died for me:
thy praise shall never, never fail
throughout eternity.

Matthew Bridges

BLESSING

May the Blessing of the Risen Christ be upon us, and those we love

May the Love of the Risen Christ bring Peace,

May the Spirit of the Risen Lord bring Comfort and Courage

This day and always.

The Lord is risen – **he is risen indeed** – Amen, Amen

**Thank you for this opportunity
to share in the Easter Celebrations together.**

**Until we meet again
STAY SAFE AND WELL**

Michael

