



An Act of Worship for Easter Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Let us worship God today, wherever we find ourselves, whether we are alone or just with our immediate family

The tomb is empty – love lives on - Christ is risen!  
Christ is risen indeed!

**HYMN:** “Jesus Christ is risen today”

1 Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!  
our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!  
who did once upon the cross Alleluia!  
suffer to redeem our loss. Alleluia!

2 Hymns of praise then let us sing  
Alleluia!  
unto Christ our heav'nly King, Alleluia!  
who endured the cross and grave,  
Alleluia!  
sinners to redeem and save. Alleluia!

3 But the pains which he endured,  
Alleluia!  
our salvation have procured; Alleluia!  
now above the sky he's King, Alleluia!  
where the angels ever sing. Alleluia!

4 Sing we to our God above Alleluia!  
praise eternal as his love; Alleluia!  
praise him, all ye heav'nly host, Alleluia!  
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Alleluia!

Why not light a candle as you say these words.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!  
Christ is risen indeed!  
This is the day that that the Lord has made  
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

**PRAYER OF ADORATION AND PRAISE**

Yours is the glory, O God,  
for raising Jesus from the darkness of death.  
Yours is the glory, O God,  
for conquering death with love.

Risen Lord Jesus, you greet us by name,  
as you greeted Mary in the garden,  
and transform our lives forever with your Easter life.  
Risen Lord Jesus, we worship and adore you;

Risen Lord Jesus, we rejoice  
that 'endless is the victory  
that you over death has won'.  
Alleluia! Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Amen

**HYMN:** "Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord"

Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord  
Alleluia, alleluia, give praise to his name

Jesus is Lord of all the earth  
He is the King of creation

Spread the good news through all the earth

Jesus has died and has risen.

We have been crucified with Christ  
Now we shall live for ever.

God has proclaimed the just reward  
Life for the world, alleluia.

Come let us praise the living God  
Joyfully sing to our Saviour!

**GOSPEL:** John 20: 1-18

### **A PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

O God, like the first witnesses of the resurrection, we too, come to the empty tomb with a variety of responses. We hear the good news that Jesus has risen, but so often the evidence for this is difficult to detect in our lives. Usually it is too easy to see Easter as a holiday only. We confess the times when we feel that worship has been an interruption to our planned holiday activities. This year as we find ourselves unable to do the things we would normally do over the Easter holiday we thank you that we can still worship you O Lord. As we come to the empty tomb seeking forgiveness for all our faults and shortcomings, help us in these difficult times to re-order our priorities so that we put the risen Christ first in our lives at all times. Help us always to remember the costly act of Jesus, an act which gives us the gift of new beginnings - guilt free and graced by love. The tomb is empty because Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia. Amen!

### **ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

Jesus "is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." Hear, believe, and live the good news.

In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!

Thanks be to God!

### **SOME THOUGHTS FOR TODAY**

That first Easter Day began very strangely. Mary comes to the tomb and finds it empty. She has no idea at all what has happened. She thinks someone has stolen Jesus' body, so she runs to tell Peter and the other disciple. They both ran to the tomb to find out what had happened and the tomb is empty just as Mary had said.

Then, a very strange thing happened. Peter and the other disciple just went back to their homes. And left Mary there, weeping.

What a strange and bizarre way to begin the story of Easter.

And then, Mary, still weeping, looks back in the tomb as if to convince herself that it is indeed empty – and finds two angels sitting there – just where Jesus' body had been lying. They ask her a question to which they surely know the answer: "Woman, why are you weeping"? This only confuses her more because she wanted to see Jesus. Still weeping she turns round and sees someone she believes to be the gardener. But when he addresses her by name, she realises that it is Jesus standing there.  
I wonder - if we had been Mary or the disciples would we have been just as confused?

Consider this dialogue between Mary and Peter

MARY: Of course I was confused Peter – I was upset - I was weeping. I thought someone had stolen Jesus' body. That's why I ran to get you. Then you ran right past me to see for yourself. You didn't even speak to me.

PETER: Of course I had to see for myself Mary – you're only a woman, how could I believe you.

MARY: Then you just went home – you knew I was upset – you didn't even stop to comfort me.

PETER: I was upset too – I didn't know what to do. I needed to think.

MARY: It didn't matter anyway what you did. I know why the tomb was empty – Jesus was standing right behind me all the time. And I thought he was the gardener. It was a wonderful experience! That's when I ran back to tell you that he had overcome death.

PETER: I still don't think we believed you.

That is the question for us also – would we have believed if we had been there? Do we even really believe that death has been defeated?

Easter – the day above all when good news is proclaimed – a day of newness – a day to speak of life. Not words about death. But words alone about the resurrection are not enough.

Just last Friday, Christians everywhere retold the story of Jesus' journey towards the cross, and death. We see very clearly the human face of Jesus as he breaks down and weeps in the garden of Gethsemane. An awful experience for him, yet one that has to give us a certain assurance - that Jesus understood, understands only too well what it is like to suffer; therefore he can identify with our suffering in a very real way. But again, these can still remain words which we can understand intellectually with our minds, without them touching our hearts or our lives at all. When we are experiencing long dark nights of pain, or suffer alongside someone who suffers, an intellectual faith provides a very faint light to see by.

And that is why we have to look to one who really suffered and who really died. Luke wrote, that "Jesus breathed his last." John wrote that Jesus' blood and water flowed out from the spear thrust in his side. His lifeless body was laid in a cold rock tomb and the entry sealed with a large stone.

Jesus died.

How then do we know that he has risen, has defeated death?

The only name common to all the gospels is that of Mary Magdalene, who, according to John, was alone at the tomb, at least at first. If the story of the empty tomb was a late

invention to prove the realistic resurrection of the body, as many witnesses as possible would have been mentioned from the outset, and *certainly* not a single woman.

And yet the witnesses common to all the gospels are women.

The women went to the tomb to honour an ending;  
they left the tomb forever part of a new beginning.

The women went to the tomb as an act of love for one person, in that place and that time.

And found a far greater love had been enacted for all people, all places and all time.

And that is all the evidence we need to know that Jesus defeated death and is risen.

Because through every age, across the world, from thatched hut to village and to city, the church has been born and sustained by one principal fact: Jesus Christ lives in the midst of its people and forgives and transforms and guides their lives.

We know that he is risen because he now lives in the midst of us.

He said "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."  
(*Matthew 18: 20*)

When Jesus spoke of gathering in his name, he meant gathering in the reality of his actual presence, embraced by the powerful energy of his transforming love.

On this day, even though we are not physically gathering together this Easter, we are gathered in his name. Wherever each of us is today in our own homes he is in our midst.

What does Easter mean?

It means that we are embraced by the love of Christ and through him, gathered into the passion of God's power and purpose, far beyond our own personal limits.

The poet T.S. Eliot begins one of his poems with the words "In our beginning is our end".<sup>1</sup> Easter proclaims: In our end is our beginning. Christ is risen – he is risen indeed. Hallelujah!.

**HYMN:** "That joyful Eastertide"

1 This joyful Eastertide,  
away with sin and sorrow!  
My Love, the Crucified,  
has sprung to life this morrow:

Refrain:

Had Christ, who once was slain,  
not burst His three-day prison,  
our faith had been in vain;  
but now has Christ arisen,  
arisen, arisen;  
but now has Christ arisen!

2 Death's flood has lost its chill  
since Jesus crossed the river;  
Lover of souls, from ill  
my passing soul deliver: [Refrain]

3 My flesh in hope shall rest  
and for a season slumber  
till trump from east to west  
shall wake the dead in number: [Refrain]

## **PRAYERS**

Loving Lord, today we remember  
the veil of darkness  
transforming to the brightest light.

The most dreadful end  
becoming the most beautiful beginning.

We remember with trembling hearts  
the depths of despair  
fading to reveal hope everlasting.

The curse of death  
defeated by eternal life.

Today we remember with thankfulness  
your willingness to be pierced for our sins.

We sing with abounding joy  
of your miraculous rise,  
from death's tomb to resplendent life.

Thank you for the promise of heaven  
and your generous invitation of eternal life for all. AMEN

## **A PRAYER FOR THE SITUATION WE FIND OURSELVES IN TODAY**

Keep us, good Lord,  
under the shadow of your mercy  
in this time of uncertainty and distress.  
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,  
and lift up all who are brought low;  
that we may rejoice in your comfort  
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love  
in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you taught us to love our neighbour,  
and to care for those in need  
as if we were caring for you.  
In this time of anxiety, give us strength  
to comfort the fearful, to tend the sick,  
and to assure the isolated  
of our love, and your love.

God of compassion,  
be close to those who are ill, afraid or in isolation.  
In their loneliness, be their consolation;  
in their anxiety, be their hope;  
in their darkness, be their light;  
through him who suffered alone on the cross,

but reigns with you in glory,  
Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

**HYMN:** "The day of resurrection!"

1 The day of resurrection!  
Earth, tell it out abroad;  
the passover of gladness,  
the passover of God.  
From death to life eternal,  
from earth unto the sky,  
our Christ hath brought us over,  
with hymns of victory.

2 Our hearts be pure from evil,  
that we may see aright  
the Lord in rays eternal  
of resurrection light;  
and listening to his accents,  
may hear, so calm and plain,  
his own "All hail!" and, hearing,  
may raise the victor strain.

3 Now let the heavens be joyful!  
Let earth the song begin!  
Let the round world keep triumph,  
and all that is therein!  
Let all things seen and unseen  
their notes in gladness blend,  
for Christ the Lord hath risen,  
our joy that hath no end.

## BENEDICTION

Go in peace to love and serve our living Lord.  
Go in the power of the risen Christ! Alleluia!

May God, the creator of all life,  
Jesus Christ, the source of eternal life,  
and the Holy Spirit, the power in each and every life,  
bless you, this day and every day. AMEN

