

Zoom Service – 4th April 2021 – Easter Day

Call to worship

We come from varied lives, each with our own experiences of sadness and happiness, of the ups and downs, the challenges and responses, of life. How this can all be held in God's hand is a mystery. But we come with faith and hope that God does hold all things together, and that darkness leads to a new dawn.

John 20.1-18

¹Early 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. ²So 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.' ³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and 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. ¹³They 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.' ¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus 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.' ¹⁶Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' which means Teacher. ¹⁷Jesus 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."' ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Singing the Faith 309 See what a morning

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| 1 | See, what a morning, gloriously bright,
with the dawning of hope in Jerusalem;
folded the graveclothes, tomb filled with light,
as the angels announce Christ is risen!
See God's salvation plan,
wrought in love, borne in pain, paid in sacrifice,
fulfilled in Christ, the Man,
for he lives: Christ is risen from the dead! | 2 | See Mary weeping, 'Where is he laid?'
as in sorrow she turns from the empty tomb;
hears a voice speaking, calling her name;
it's the Master, the Lord raised to life again!
The voice that spans the years,
speaking life, stirring hope, bringing peace to us,
will sound till he appears,
for he lives: Christ is risen from the dead! |
| 3 | One with the Father, Ancient of Days,
through the Spirit who clothes faith with certainty;
honour and blessing, glory and praise
to the King crowned with power and authority!
And we are raised with him,
death is dead, love has won, Christ has conquered;
and we shall reign with him,
for he lives: Christ is risen from the dead! | | |

Prayers

Father God, I come to you as a child to their loving parent. I share the ups and downs of my life with you. When I cry on your shoulder, may I know the comfort of hearing you call me tenderly by name, and the new dawn of resurrection in my life. **Amen.**

In my mind's eye, I behold my feet in sandals, head bowed in sorrow as I walk a dusty path in cool morning air. The scent of the embalming spices I carry wafts around me and those who accompany me, the texture of the linen rolls clamped between arm and body smooth to the touch. Ahead of me looms the tomb. I lift my eyes to face the cold stone at its mouth, the boundary between life and death.

But it is not there – the boundary has been breached. He is risen! Alleluia!

God of resurrection, ever renewing, ever reviving, I adore you for your life-giving presence. Son of Man, newly risen, sorrow made joy, I adore you for your sacrificial living and dying. Holy Spirit, breezing among us all on this Easter morn, I adore you for breathing new life into me. **Amen.**

A prayer of confession and an Assurance of forgiveness

Lord, I love the joy of Easter Sunday, but I may not have walked through Holy Week. I may not have been humbled by Jesus' hands washing my feet. I may not have tasted the bread and wine of his last shared meal. I may not have known the primal fear of Gethsemane, or the bewilderment of the disciples at his betrayal. I have not known the way of sorrow to Golgotha, the blood, sweat and tears of a crown of thorns and the weight of a cross that will bear my dying body. Therefore, Lord, I confess my failure to feel at one with Jesus in his dying as well as in his resurrection life. As I celebrate my risen Lord, I remember the man of sorrows who died for my sins, and I bow my head in penitence.

Silent prayer

Assurance of forgiveness

Lord, in the warmth of your hands washing human feet, I am forgiven.

Lord, in your willingness to drink the cup of suffering for us, I am forgiven.

Lord, in the wide embrace of your arms upon the cross, I am forgiven.

Risen Lord, in your emerging from the tomb, death is defeated.

I am forgiven. Alleluia! Amen!

Acts 10.34-43

³⁴Peter began to speak to those assembled in the house of Cornelius. '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.'

Singing the Faith 305 Low in the grave he lay - Robert Lowry (1826–1899)

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| 1 | Low in the grave he lay,
Jesus, my Saviour,
waiting the coming day,
Jesus, my Lord:
<i>Up from the grave he arose,
with a mighty triumph o'er his foes;
he arose a victor from the dark domain,
and he lives for ever with his saints to reign:
He arose! He arose!
Alleluia! Christ arose!</i> | 2 | Vainly they watch his bed,
Jesus, my Saviour;
vainly they seal the dead,
Jesus, my Lord: |
| | | 3 | Death cannot keep his prey,
Jesus, my Saviour;
he tore the bars away,
Jesus, my Lord: |

Reflection

I remember returning to a graveside a few hours after a funeral. The earth had been put back into the grave leaving a mound above which, with time, would settle leaving the ground flat again. But for now, the flowers remained giving some brightness to a sad occasion. I valued that quiet time when I could grieve in a way that I couldn't before, a time when I could weep, shout silently at God and find a calmness within.

As the women went to Jesus' tomb what did they expect to find? A stone sealing the cave into which the body had been placed? Were they taking flowers, embalming oils or just returning to the place where their loved one lay to grieve? Let's not try to assume anything – instead imagine why you might have gone there on that morning and just quietly place yourself outside of the tomb.

But of course, they find the stone rolled away, later the linen wrappings are seen folded and separate to the head cloth, but Jesus is not there. What has happened?

As the stories unfold over the days that follow so the disciples come to know that Jesus has indeed risen. But on that first morning it is Mary who meets with Jesus and doesn't even recognise him until he speaks her name. This story aids my understanding of what His resurrection means for me today. How many times I have wanted to know His presence with me and yet have struggled to find Him. How many times I have felt abandoned by God in days of deep despair. Yet as I look back, I know that I was not alone at that graveside, at each failure, at the end of something good or bad.

Each time the Israelites felt like God had left them, felt alone and abandoned, they looked back to their faithful God who had walked with them in the wilderness and led them to the promised land. They would sing 'I will trust in Your unfailing love'. For us as Christians as we look back to the cross of Good Friday and the bad that happened so we should be drawn forward to Easter Day. The day of resurrection, the day of victory over the grave, the day when Jesus rose from the dead and we should know that this means that he will walk with us on life's journey.

Jesus is alive and reigns with the Father, and yet as we deal with the problems in life, he is there with us, calling our names so that we may know his presence.

On this Easter Day, take yourself to the empty tomb, see the stone rolled away, see the grave clothes which are no longer needed and then wait in the quiet listening for Jesus to speak your name. But also return often for he wants to talk with you today and every day so that you may be led to the promised land.

Singing the Faith 297 Christ is alive!

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| 1 | Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.
The cross stands empty to the sky.
Let streets and homes with praises ring.
Love, drowned in death, shall never die. | 2 | Christ is alive! No longer bound
to distant years in Palestine,
but saving, healing, here and now,
and touching every place and time. |
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3 In every insult, rift and war,
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,
and lives, where even hope has died.

4 Women and men, in age and youth,
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,
and find the way, the life, the truth,
revealed in Jesus, freed for all.

5 Christ is alive and comes to bring
good news to this and every age,
till earth and sky and ocean ring
with joy, with justice, love, and praise.

Brian Wren (b. 1936). Words: © 1969, 1995, Stainer & Bell Ltd, 23 Gruneisen Road, London N3 1DZ <www.stainer.co.uk>

Intercessions

When people weep because they are oppressed, because they are destitute, because they are being destroyed by warfare, because all hope for the future lies dead, Come, Risen Lord: wipe away all tears.

When people weep because they are anxious and afraid, because they are ill, because they are racked with pain, because someone they love has died, Come, Risen Lord: wipe away all tears.

When people weep because they are lonely, because no one listens to them, because people have been cruel, because they long for death, Come, Risen Lord: wipe away all tears.

When people weep at the sins they have committed at the emptiness of their lives at their failures in loving at the thought of death, Come, Risen Lord: wipe away all tears.

Risen Lord, come to us, even when we cannot recognize you through our tears, and call to us, that our lives may be transformed by Easter joy. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer (in whichever version you are comfortable with)

Dedicate your offerings to God

Singing the Faith 299 Easter jubilation fills the streets and towns

1 Easter jubilation fills the streets and towns,
celebrations have begun.
Hear the music and the dancing now,
join the laughter and the fun!

*Oh, raise a joyful shout!
Clap your hands and dance,
let your feelings out.
Oh, hear what it's about:
Christ, the Lord, has come
to set us free.*

2 Put aside your sorrows, wipe your tears away,
for a better time will come.
There's a promise of a better day,
join the laughter and the fun!

3 Easter jubilation fills the streets and towns,
celebrations have begun.
Hear the music and the dancing now,
join the laughter and the fun!
(Refrain)

Hoy!

Mark Johnson and Helen Johnson. Words and Music: © Out of the Ark Music

Prayer

God of new life and new beginnings, we have been drawn together today to encounter again the mysterious story of life everlasting. Help me, like Mary, to stay close to this mystery, to embrace my emotions, to hear you when you call me by name, and to experience new wonders. And, may I know the blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as he I am accompanied on life's journey. Amen.

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