



DSW written service
Easter Sunday 20 April 2025

Greeting :

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Hymn [STF 298]

Christ the Lord is risen today, *Alleluia!*

All creation joins to say:

Raise your joys and triumphs high:

Sing you heavens; let earth, reply:

Love's redeeming work is done, *Alleluia!*

Fought the fight, the battle won;

Vain the stone, the watch, the seal:

Christ has burst the gates of hell:

Lives again our glorious King:

Where, O death, is now your sting?

Once he died our souls to save;

Where's your victory, boasting grave?

Soar we now where Christ hath led,

Following our exalted Head;

Made like him, like him we rise;

Ours the cross, the grave, the skies:

King of Glory! Soul of bliss!

Everlasting life is this,

You to know, your power to prove,

Thus to sing, and thus to love:

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Prayers

Risen Lord Jesus, thank you.

Thank you for the delight and elation of this day.

Thank you for the victory you won for us on the cross,

Thank you for beating the powers of evil and death for us,

Thank you for the light you bring into our lives & our souls,

Thank you for the joy, the exuberance, that lifts our hearts,

because we know things cannot ever be the same, things will always be different,

because from now on, your story is his-story is our story.

The story of life. The story of death defeated.

The story of Jesus.

And today, we can take part again in the story of life fulfilled, of death defeated, of hope assured.

Lord Jesus we come to thank you and also to ask your forgiveness this morning,

For the times when we've fallen into despair,

When we've allowed the worries of our lives to take over and allowed ourselves to lose our hope in you,

For the times we've felt afraid of death, forgetting that you won the victory for us on the cross;

When we've failed to put our trust in you and you alone.

Forgive us Lord, when our attitudes and our behaviour, the things we say & do each day

have not reflected the knowledge we have

that Jesus is alive! That our sins are forgiven!

That we have been set free from all that

threatens to prevent us from becoming whole!

Please forgive us when our behaviour leads

others to wonder whether these are just beliefs or pious hopes in our heads, rather than life

changing truths we hold in our hearts.

Lord, this Easter, please come to us afresh in your risen glory and power.

Fill us with your Holy Spirit, so that the truth of who you are, & what you've done for us,

overflows into our lives, and into the person each of us is in the world. We ask in the name of our

Risen Saviour. Amen

Reading: Luke 24: 1-12

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb,³ but when they

entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.⁴ While they were wondering about this,

suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.⁵ In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the

ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead?'⁶ He is not

here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee:⁷ 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of

sinner, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'⁸ Then they remembered his words.

⁹ When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others.¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them

who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. ¹² Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

Reflection

Each year in the 3 lectionary cycle we read one of the gospel accounts of that first Easter morning – each of them tells the same story with slightly different details (which is just as it should be, given that we’re all different and when different people witness the same event they often give a slightly different account of what they saw, as I know from the days when I took witness statements in my work as a solicitor investigating accidents).

Today we focus on Luke’s description of the women going to the tomb to tend to Jesus’ body after the Sabbath, as was the custom of the day.

And I wonder what it must have been like that first Easter morning? What were the sights and sound in the quietness of dawn, what fears and trepidation filled those women as they made their way towards the tomb, with the enormous stone placed across it?

Perhaps they planned to ask the men posted to guard the tomb to move it for them - imagine their shock when they got there and saw the stone has been removed, and then, when they go in, and find no body to anoint!

And then we’re told these figures appear “shining like lightning” – just imagine for a moment what lightning looks like – so bright it lights up the whole sky - no wonder they bowed their heads to avoid looking at them!

The men challenge them – “Why look for the living among the dead?” and then tell them Jesus isn’t there because he’s risen, just like he said he would.

The women go back to tell the disciples, and I wonder how it felt trying to explain what they’d just witnessed? Not surprisingly there’s a degree of scepticism among the men! In Luke’s version only Peter goes to see for himself, he doesn’t see the angelic men but he does see the rolled away stone and, when he look inside, the strips of linen which had covered Jesus’ dead body - which was not there anymore.

The story of the resurrection is familiar to many of us, which is good in one sense, but not if it means we lose the sense of wonder at what happened that morning. Not if we’re just marking today by remembering the story of Jesus as a beloved hero of the past, rather than a living person we know and love, who is still alive and active today.

For some people it’s tempting to reduce the events of Easter day to a historical story with a happy ending, about new life blossoming like spring. Others get bogged down in discussions about whether can we actually prove that the things that are alleged to have happened did actually happen?

But both approaches run the risk that we forget what Easter and the Resurrection actually meant, and still means today, for our lives in the here and now.

Easter is the day when history changed for ever – supernaturally. Resurrection after all, is not a normal thing, it’s supernatural, which can make it feel slightly scary, because it’s beyond our understanding.

What happened at Easter is not normal, and, as theologian Craig Barnes points out: “After the resurrection, things do not return to normal. That’s the good news. It is basic to everything else the New Testament proclaims. After seeing a risen Jesus, we see that there is no normal.”

After the resurrection the old normal is changed and the new normal is here – the new normal that was fulfilled at Pentecost when the promised power of Holy Spirit came on all of the disciples. And we see later on in the book of Acts what a difference the transforming power of God’s Holy Spirit made to Peter and the other disciples.

Remember that feeling you get when you first realise the truth that something wonderful is going to happen, or has just happened, that you didn’t dare to believe was possible?

A bit like the feeling you get when you realise that someone else really values you as a friend.

Or when someone tells you for the first time that they love you.

Or when you realise that the miracle of new life in the form of a baby, is being created in you, or in someone you know and care about.

Or when you get the all-clear after a prolonged illness.

Or when you realise that something you've prayed for, for a long time, and hardly dared hope for, is finally starting to happen.

I imagine that's how the women and then the disciples must have felt, when the penny finally began to drop and they realised that everything Jesus had promised would happen, was actually happening.

Christian writer Max Lucado invites us to think about why the stone was removed and by whom. According to the Bible accounts, it wasn't the soldiers or the temple guards, or the disciples, or the women who moved the stone. (Matthew's gospel says it was an angel of the Lord who moved the stone and the soldiers guarding the stone shook with fear when they saw him and became like dead men.) Essentially it was the power of God that moved the stone.

And, Lucado argues, if you think about it, there can only be one reason why the stone needed to be moved - which wasn't so that Jesus could get out. Firstly, because the Bible doesn't say that, but also because, why would Almighty God, who demonstrated his supernatural power throughout history, as recounted in hundreds of accounts in the Old Testament, or Jesus, who conquered the powers of nature and evil and disease and even death during his ministry on earth, worry about a stone blocking the way out of the tomb, however big it was?

Instead he suggests that the stone was removed not to let Jesus out, but so that the women, and later Peter and the others, could look inside the tomb and see that Jesus was not there, because he had been raised by the mighty resurrection power of God, just as he promised.

And God's promise in Jesus is that he will move the "stones" in our lives, so that we can see his transforming resurrection power at work.

Easter Day shows us that Jesus could not be killed, even by the combined darkest powers of evil. And Easter shows that the new life that God in Jesus offers to us cannot be killed either.

Because of Easter, Jesus is making a new creation of our lives, calling us beyond the Fridays of our

suffering, our losses & disappointments, into the new hope his resurrection offers.

We have the choice about whether we follow Jesus into that new life or not, because Jesus invites, he does not force.

That amazing resurrection power is still at work. Today we're celebrating the truth that Jesus is risen, Jesus is alive, and he is calling us to be his ambassadors and agents, the channels through whom his resurrection transforming power is still being manifested in our lives, our actions and our words, and our world.

So the Easter story isn't just a historical account, it's a present reality and a future promise which is being fulfilled through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

And when we accept that promise, by inviting Jesus to come and be Lord of our hearts and forgive our sins, and transform our lives, we can see that his resurrection power is still at work in lives and hearts, and that one day we will discover the wonderful truth of his promise of new life beyond death with him.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Hymn [STF 313]

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, risen, conquering Son,
Endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won.*

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 has lost its sting;

No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of Life;
Life is nought 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;
Edmund L Budry (1854-1932) tr. Richard B Hoyle (1875-1939)

Prayers for our world

On this Easter morning we welcome you Lord Jesus into our lives.
We welcome your resurrection for what it is -

life-changing, life-giving and life-sustaining.
We welcome the hope it brings to our world.
We welcome the joy it brings to our sadness.
We welcome the empty tomb, for we know that
it means that you are alive and at work in our
world.

As we remember the women who went to the
tomb that first morning in their misery, we pray
for those who live in despair,
who go through the motions of living with no joy
in their hearts:
the poor and hungry, in their daily dehumanizing
struggle;
the lonely and loveless, who have no sense of
self-worth;
the empty and depressed, for whom life is
meaningless.
Thank you Jesus that you are the Lord of hope
who has burst out of the tomb of despair.

As we remember Peter and the other disciples in
their lostness, we pray for those who feel
defeated,
whose plans and dreams for the future have been
erased and shattered:
the workers for justice driven underground;
the seriously ill whose recovery is doubtful or
slow;
the partners in a relationship that is breaking
down.
Thank you Jesus that you are the Lord of love
who has burst out of the tomb of defeat.

God of life and hope, we pray for those who are
bereaved,
whose lives shattered by a loss that leaves them
shocked, confused, angry and in pain:
for those uprooted from home, family and
friends;
for those whose faith in you has died.
Thank you Jesus that you are the Lord of life:
who has burst out of the tomb of death.

Lord, may your resurrection give life to those
who feel lifeless,
Lord, may your resurrection give hope to those
who feel hopeless,
Lord, may your resurrection give joy to those
who feel no joy,
Lord, may you be at work in this world as the
Risen One,
Please move away the stones of hatred, greed,
evil and death in our world so that all may see
the wonderful, transforming, liberating power of

your grace and love changing hearts and lives
today.
We ask in Jesus' name as we say the prayer he
gave us.....

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn [to tune of STF 196]

*Come and join the celebration,
It's a very special day.
Come and share our jubilation,
Jesus Christ is Risen today!*

See the women, hurry to the tomb and then,
Gaze in wonder at the stone, so huge, rolled back
before them:
Come and join the celebration...

Christ is Risen, round the world the message
rings.
"Alleluia", listen all the folks on earth are singing:
Come and Join the celebration....

(Partners In Learning)

Sending Out Prayer

Risen Lord Jesus,
as the women who went to the tomb told their
story to the disciples;
open our mouths, our hearts & our lives
to tell the story of our Easter hope & joy in you
to those we know and those we meet,
and to share the good news of your love and
grace for people everywhere, always.
Amen.

The risen Christ came and stood among his
disciples and said:
'Peace be with you!'
Then they were glad when they saw the Lord.
Alleluia!
The peace of the risen Christ be always with you.
Alleluia!



Rev Jane Wilson
April 2025