



Birstall and Rothley Methodist Churches

A Service for Easter Sunday April 4th, 2021



This service has been prepared for use at home.

If you are able to join us online at 10:30am on Sunday,

Reading: Mark 16:1-8

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.

And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?"

When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you."

So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Hymn

StF 294

1. All you who seek the Lord who died,
your God, for sinners crucified,
now, now let all your grief be o'er!
Believe and you shall weep no more.
2. The Lord of Life is risen indeed,
to death delivered in your stead;
his rise proclaims your sins forgiven,
and shows the living way to heaven.
3. Haste then, ye souls that first believe,
who dare the gospel word receive,
your faith with joyful hearts confess,
be bold, be Jesus' witnesses.
4. Go, tell the followers of your Lord
their Jesus is to life restored;
he lives to quicken humankind,
he lives that all his life may find.

words: Charles Wesley (1707-88)

Reflection

Mark tells us that three women bought spices and went to the tomb just after daybreak, wondering who would roll away the stone so they could go in to anoint Jesus' body. They weren't expecting the tomb to be open. They weren't expecting Jesus to have been raised.

Jesus had foretold his death many times, and always reassured his friends that he would rise three days later. Why do you think they were so surprised when it happened?

Mark says that the women were too afraid to give the young man's message to their friends. What do you think they were afraid of?

Have you ever talked to anyone about the resurrection, and what it means to you?
Did you (or would you) expect them to believe you?

What difference does Jesus' resurrection make?

Prayer of Confession

Ever-living God, we proclaim that Christ is risen
and that we are raised to new life with him.
On this Easter Day, we rejoice!
We love to sing the Easter hymns and praise your power and might.

And yet, we often live our lives as if we don't believe it;
as if Jesus had stayed in the tomb,
and we don't expect to hear him speaking your Word,
touching our wounds,
making us whole,
bringing us peace.

We go on with life as it has always been,
not really expecting anything to change;
not expecting release from all that binds us.

Your empty tomb stands in silent rebuke.
How can we face you?

***Living Lord,
Forgive the fear that paralyzes us at the brink of new life.
Forgive our doubt of your love.
Forgive our distrust of your surprising, joyous plan.
Fill our emptiness with your glorious light.
Raise us to abundant new life
for the glory of your name.***

Sisters and brothers,
Christ has forgiven our sins.
Christ calls us to new life, and will lead us on

***Thanks be to God!
Amen.***

Hymn

StF 296

1. Christ has risen while earth slumbers,
Christ has risen where hope died,
as he said and as he promised,
as we doubted and denied.
Let the moon embrace the blessing;
let the sun sustain the cheer;
let the world confirm the rumour.
Christ is risen, God is here!
2. Christ has risen for the people
whom he loved and died to save;
Christ has risen for the women
bringing flowers to grace his grave.
Christ has risen for disciples
huddled in an upstairs room.
He whose word inspired creation
is not silenced by the tomb.
3. Christ has risen to companion
former friends who fear the night,
sensing loss and limitation
where their faith had once burned bright.
They bemoan what is no longer,
they expect no hopeful sign
till Christ ends their conversation,
breaking bread and sharing wine.
4. Christ has risen and forever
lives to challenge and to change
all whose lives are messed or mangled,
all who find religion strange.
Christ is risen. Christ is present
making us what he has been –
evidence of transformation
in which God is known and seen.

*Words by John L. Bell (b.1949)
& Graham Maule (1958-2019)*

Reflection

Mark's gospel ends very abruptly, with an empty tomb and a promise.

The young man tells the women that if they (or their friends) believe that Jesus is alive, and want to see him again, they will have to go to Galilee. Why do you think that Jesus wanted them to go back there?

The women's response is one of incomprehension, fear and apparent disobedience. The gospel ends without telling us if they did as the young man said.

But they must have overcome their bewilderment, and their fear, and shared their story. The men must have listened, and overcome their own surprise and reluctance. And together they did as they were bidden, and went back north.

They met the Risen Jesus, received his grace and peace, and a new commission.

Prayer of Praise and Thankfulness

Now we know:

all is grace

all is gift.

You give us all good things:

life and love;

daily bread and water that quenches our thirst;

friends and faith.

Most of all, in your Son, Jesus,
you meet us with a love that will never let us go;
you utter words of mercy and forgiveness
that override the hurts,
and heal our brokenness;
you offer new beginnings
where we had expected only dead ends.

We give you thanks and praise
for the mystery of your suffering love
that gives us life.

We give you thanks and praise
that you know our weakness
and hear our prayers.

We give you thanks and praise
that all our dying and living
is held in your good keeping.

Now we know:

all is grace

all is gift.

We give you thanks and praise.

Amen

Hymn

StF 314

1. This joyful Eastertide,
What need is there for grieving?
Cast all your cares aside
And be not unbelieving:

*Come, share our Easter joy
that death could not imprison,
Nor any power destroy
our Christ, who is arisen!*

2. No work for him is vain,
no faith in him mistaken,
for Easter makes it plain
his Kingdom is not shaken:

Come, share our Easter joy

3. Then put your trust in Christ,
In waking and in sleeping,
His grace on earth sufficed;
He'll never quit his keeping:

Come, share our Easter joy

words: Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000)

Responsive Litany

O God, who made the world and everything in it,
we pray with one voice, proclaiming your presence to all the earth.

For skeptics and believers, for clergy high and low;
For those who seek God at home, at work, in the streets, and in the pews,
For all who search for life, come and listen:

And we will tell you what God has done for us.

We are alive in the spirit.
We are saved through water.
Because Christ lives, we also live.

For we too are God's offspring.

For presidents and prime ministers, for bosses and wardens;
For those who set the course at home, at work, in the streets, and in the pews,
For all who wield power, come and listen:

And we will tell you what our God has done for us.

We do not fear what others fear.
We proclaim the hope that is in us.
Because Christ lives, we also live.

For we too are God's offspring.

For friends and lovers, for neighbours and strangers,
For those who eat bread at home, at work, in the streets, and in the pews,
For all who live in the world, come and listen:

And we will tell you what our God has done for us.

In God, we live and move and have our being.
From God, we have life and breath and all things.
Because Christ lives, we also live.

For we too are God's offspring.

For the sick and troubled, for the fearful and alone,
For those in pain at home, at work, in the streets, and in the pews,
For all who suffer, come and listen:

And we will tell you what our God has done for us.

Our prayers are not rejected.
Our souls are held in life.
In truth, our God has heard us,
and love is not withheld.
Because Christ lives, we also live.

For we too are God's offspring.

For those kept in memory, for those long forgotten,
For all who ever took the breath of life at home, at work, in the streets, and in the pews,
For the dead and those who mourn them, come and listen:

And we will tell you what our God has done for us.

We are blessed by your presence.
We are filled with the Spirit.
Because Christ lives, we also live.

For we too are God's offspring.

God of heaven and earth,
Companion in life,
Spirit of truth,
to you alone we turn our eyes and lift our hearts.

Amen.

Hymn StF 311

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 has 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
disown "All hail!" and, hearing,
may raise the victor strain.
3. Now let the heavens be joyful
let earth her sing begin!
The round world keep high triumph,
and all that is therein.
Let all things, seen and unseen
their notes of gladness blend,
for Christ the Lord is risen,
our joy that has no end.

*words: St John of Damascus (c.675-c.750)
translated by John Mason Neale (1811-66)*

Blessing

Dance, celebrate, sing, and shout for joy!
Christ is Risen and He goes before us,
into this world of fear and pain.
He has called us to bring the Good News
of healing and hope, of redemption.
Go in peace, and feel the presence of the Risen Lord with you,
now and forever.

Amen.