

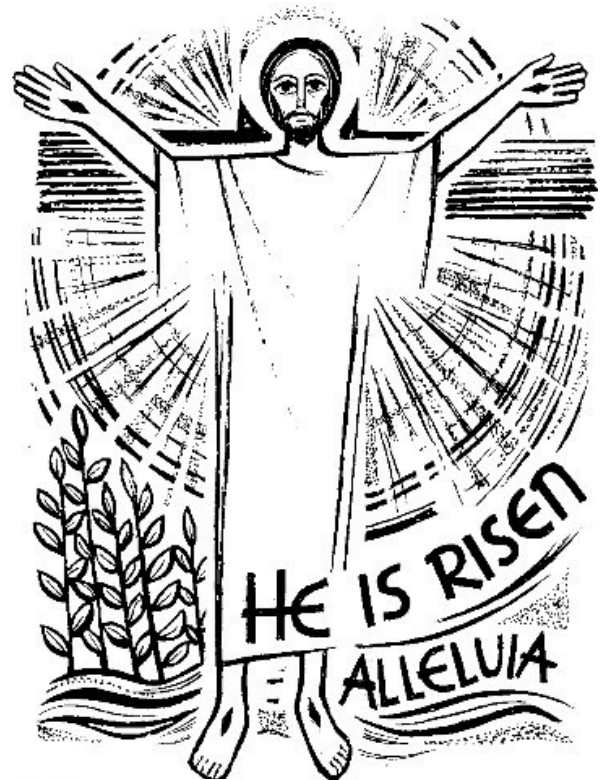
Worship At Home - Easter 2021

Sunday 4th April 2021

"I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene and wonder how He could love me. Love me, a sinner, condemned, unclean. How marvellous, how wonderful and my song shall ever be How marvellous, how wonderful Is my Saviour's love for me For me it was in the garden He prayed, "not my will, but Thine. He had no tears for His own griefs but sweat drops of blood for mine. He took my sins and my sorrows and He made them His very own as He bore the burden of Calvary and suffered and died alone.

With the ransomed in glory His face I at last shall see 'Twill be my joy through the ages, to sing of His love for me."

Today it is my joy to share His message with anyone who is reading this, with anyone who is open to hearing the voice of the risen Saviour. Today is Easter day. The day when we celebrate Jesus' rising from the dead and being restored to life. Please stand with me if you believe and sing/listen/meditate on the words of our opening hymn.



Happy Easter

CCLI 620398

Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - In Christ Alone.

¹ In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease
My Comforter, my All in All
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

³ There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

² In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live.

⁴ No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand
Till He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

<https://youtu.be/AG0xbm1UzDU>

CCLI 620398

Let us pray

Risen Jesus, You came with words of peace.
Help me to speak peace, to be peace and to offer peace in your name.
Today may we realise afresh today what
Your death and resurrection mean for me.

Forgiveness, freedom, and the ability to walk with You through this fallen world into eternity.

May I always find my satisfaction in You and Your willingness to offer Yourself to me.

As we hear the story of Your resurrection
open our eyes to who does what, when and where.

May we be there in the garden along with the women, may we be there with the Disciples

May we be amazed and joyous. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

Reading: John 20:1-18

Reflection: Change!

One of the headlines I have seen and one of the comments I have heard in this last year is that 'Everything has changed' - I can understand that comment in the light of the coronavirus pandemic. **So much has changed:**

1. Level of certainty about so many things for so many people have changed
2. A lot of future plans have changed or are on hold
3. Mobility - freedoms - travelling outside the UK has changed Things we took for granted has changed
4. Income has changed for so many
5. Health and wellbeing concerns have changed and more.
6. Many of those we knew and loved are gone from our sight

A lot has changed and changing so fast that I don't know where we will be in an hour, in a week, in a month. When we celebrated Easter last year just a few weeks after the first lockdown began Prime Minister Boris Johnson was in intensive care fighting for his life. It's easy to think that everything has changed, but I want to ask, 'Has everything changed?' I don't think so. A lot has changed but not everything.

You haven't changed. Your loved ones and those close to you haven't changed
The values you hold dear haven't changed. The qualities that we so highly prize like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (The fruits of the Spirit), haven't changed. When I hear that list, I think we need these qualities even more in this season. **These things haven't changed.**

Today I want to affirm and remind ourselves that God hasn't changed. In fact, if there was a time when everything changed, it wasn't 2020 and it wasn't through coronavirus. It was the first Easter. The message of life and death and the opportunity to reach out to God changed radically.

Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. A sign of change when Jesus changed the rules of life and death. **When everything changed.** The stone was rolled away. What that points to is, death has been defeated - that's real change. Mary and the disciples keep getting things wrong and yet they note it down
V2 'and we don't know where they have put him!'

9 'They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead'. Why would you add that if it is not true?

11 'Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb' She still is not understanding what is going on...

14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realise that it was Jesus.

15 Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.'
Mary is looking in the wrong direction. She is looking at the tomb where Jesus has been, but it is only when she turns and faces Jesus, that hope and help come. You don't make that level of detail, containing all your errors and that makes it a so much more trustworthy. This is a season, amidst the turmoil, amidst the change, when people are looking for something or someone to trust. I have already told you where I stand.

Every Easter we hear these same Gospel words, and yet every year we hear the story fresh and new, as if we've never heard it before. The empty tomb, the confusion of the disciples, and then the dawning comprehension that Jesus has truly risen—all these work together to restore our hope and renew our faith.

Mary is the first of Jesus' followers to come to the place where his body had been laid after his death. This gospel account doesn't tell us why she comes or why she felt it necessary to be there first thing in the morning. Maybe she wanted to spend some quiet time remembering her friend, reflecting on the events of the past week. Maybe she came to be sure his body had been properly taken care of by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. Or maybe she went to the grave to convince herself that it was all a bad dream that Jesus had been tortured, crucified, had died, and was buried.

Whatever the reason, when Mary discovers that the tomb is wide open, the heavy stone covering the cave moved to the side, and the inside empty, she runs to find Peter and John. The two men race to see for themselves, arriving, we might imagine, breathless and panting. Again, we can't be sure why they feel the need to run, but some sense of urgency speeds them to the tomb to see for themselves. Maybe it was Mary's distress over the missing body, perhaps mingled with the memory of Jesus telling them he would rise after three days. Whatever motivates them, they get there quickly and peer into the tomb. Both men determine that indeed, the place where Jesus had been laid is empty. Both men saw that the tomb was empty, and yet did not fully understand what it meant.

Keep your eyes on Mary, though. While the men leave for home, she stays behind. She's inconsolable; weeping, tears streaming down her face as she grieves the loss of her friend. We can only imagine her thoughts and the emotions she's experiencing. And then, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, two angels appear, sitting inside the tomb. Mary does not question why they are there; she doesn't seem to be intimidated or frightened, because when they ask why she is crying, she answers right away. Sobbing, she tells them "they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."

Mary turns around - maybe she hears a voice calling her name... and there before her is Jesus the risen Lord. How does she respond? First of all through her tear stained eyes she thinks it is the gardener, but then he speaks directly to her - "Mary.". She recognises the voice and her sadness is turned to joy. Immediately she recognises Jesus and response "Rabbi". Jesus called her name, and she was filled with hope.

Jesus comes to us in surprising ways, and he acts in the world in surprising ways, when we open our eyes to see and our ears to hear.

This story is personal: Jesus calls your name, and Jesus commissions you! Yes, Jesus sends each one of us out into the world to go and tell. What a story we have to share! How can we keep from shouting the Good News? We can carry that message of hope wherever we go.

Lord, our world may be changing around it, it may be revolving around us at a rate we cannot comprehend. But we know that we have nothing to fear because you are walking with us. Today we pray for those who know it is Easter, but do not join in the celebration; for those who walk in the sunshine, but cannot feel the warmth; for those who see the flowers, but fail to appreciate their beauty. **We pray for all those in need of joy this day.** We pray: for those who see the joy in others, but look away; for those who mourn what might have been; for those who spoil the good things in life. **We pray for all those in need of love this day.** We pray: for those who long to step out into the daylight; for those who want to dance in the rain; for those who want release from their captivity. **We pray for all those in need of hope this day.**

There are many gardens of tears in the world: we pray today for all those who suffer in body or in mind... Out of the world's distress and change we call to you, Lord, for you are our salvation; your steadfast love endures for ever. **Amen**

Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - Christ is risen, he has risen indeed

- ¹ How can it be, the One who died, Has born our sin through sacrifice
To conquer every sting of death? Come, sing hallelujah.
For joy awakes as dawning light When Christ's disciples lift their eyes.
Alive He stands, their Friend and King; Christ, Christ He is risen.
- 2 Christ is risen, He is risen indeed! Oh, sing hallelujah.
Join the chorus, sing with the redeemed; Christ is risen, He is risen indeed.
Where doubt and darkness once had been, They saw Him and their hearts believed.
But blessed are those who have not seen, Yet, sing hallelujah.
- 3 Once bound by fear now bold in faith, They preached the truth and power of grace.
And pouring out their lives they gained Life, life everlasting.
Christ is risen, He is risen indeed! Oh, sing hallelujah.
Join the chorus, sing with the redeemed; Christ is risen, He is risen indeed.
- ⁴ The power that raised Him from the grave. Now works in us to powerfully save.
He frees our hearts to live His grace; Go tell of His goodness.
Christ is risen, He is risen indeed! Oh, sing hallelujah.
Join the chorus, sing with the redeemed; Christ is risen, He is risen indeed.
Christ is risen, He is risen indeed! Oh, sing hallelujah.
Join the chorus, sing with the redeemed; Christ is risen, He is risen indeed.
- He has risen, He's alive, He's alive. Heaven's gates are open wide. He's alive,
He's alive. Now in heaven glorified. He's alive, He's alive,
Heaven's gates are open wide. He's alive, He's alive, Now in heaven glorified.

Have a very blessed Easter. May God walk with you today, tomorrow and for evermore.

May the peace of God, our Heav'nly Father, And the grace of Christ the risen Son,
And the fellowship God the Spirit Keep our hearts and minds within his love.

*And to Him be praise for His glorious reign;
From the depths of earth to the heights of heaven.
We declare the name of the Lamb once slain- Christ eternal, the King of Kings.*

May this peace which passes understanding, And this grace which makes us what
we are, And this fellowship of His communion, Make us one in spirit and in heart.

*And to Him be praise for His glorious reign;
From the depths of earth to the heights of heaven.
We declare the name of the Lamb once slain- Christ eternal, the King of Kings.*

Amen

*Thank you to those who have taken the time to contact me. Take care out there this week.
May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you this day and each day.*

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If you choose to email me, please can you tell me who you are and where you live. Thank you. 4