

Worship At Home

11th April 2021

Christ is risen
All is changed
All are changed
Christ has risen
All may worship

So, let us join with the church throughout time and around the world, proclaiming the risen Lord and his great love for everyone.
Let us worship God together

"How wonderful it is, how pleasant, for God's people to live together in harmony! That is where the Lord has promised his blessing— life that never ends."
Psalm 133

Lord Jesus

We come from a world confused about truth. We come with our own uncertainties. Let us bring the darkness of human understanding into the presence of God, who is light. Let us bring the story of our search for truth and share in fellowship the things we have heard and seen and touched. Lord, we recognise your presence with us now. We acclaim you as our risen Saviour. May your peace be with us as we gather to worship and sing your praise. Amen.



Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - MP 296 How marvellous! How wonderful,

1 I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene,
And wonder how he could love me, a sinner, condemned, unclean.

CCLI 620398

*How marvellous! How wonderful! And my song shall ever be;
How marvellous! How wonderful! Is my Saviour's love for me!*

2 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.

How marvellous....

3 He took my sins and my sorrows, He made them his very own;
He bore the burden to Cal'ry, And suffered and died alone.

How marvellous....

4 When 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.

How marvellous....

The story of 'doubting Thomas' is often seen as a negative one - the disciple who wouldn't believe without seeing the risen Jesus - and yet he is someone who just wanted to see the evidence for himself. It would have been easy for Thomas to go along with his friends who had already seen Jesus, but Thomas wanted to experience it for himself in order to believe. The meeting with Jesus provides him with the chance to test the truth for himself. In the age of social media and fake news, what helps us to believe in something? Is it knowing where it comes from, personal experience, physical evidence?

Reading: John 20: 19-31

Let us pray

As on that day, Christ comes to meet us, bearing the scars on His hands and His side. As to the disciples then, so now Christ gives us His peace and bids us come to Him. As in that moment, Christ breathes His spirit on us, to equip us for the work we have to do. Bless us, Lord, for we believe. Thank you Lord, for the opportunities you have given us this week and for the strength and love you gave us to do your work and be your people. God, we turn to you in confidence to confess those times when we doubted you. Forgive us and help us to confess those times when we have hidden from your presence. Forgive us and help us; to confess those times when we have been hesitant to speak of your glory. Forgive us and help us; to confess those times when we have been slow to rejoice in your goodness. Forgive us and help us - for we ask in Jesus' name. **Amen.**



Spend a moment considering the following questions as you listen to this music. <https://youtu.be/2MeVs6w32Xk>

- How can you tell if something is 'fake news'?
- If someone asked, what is your 'evidence' for your faith?
- What would you ask Jesus if you had the chance?

Reflection: Hooked on Jesus

In a busy shopping precinct on a Saturday afternoon, a salesperson is delivering a sales pitch for a new cleaning product. The presentation is smart, clever, and jovial. A small crowd has gathered and is engaging with the demonstration, attracted by the salesperson's banter. They are smiling and laughing and nodding to one another - and to the salespersons when he catches their eye. On a table nearby, two assistants are doing a reasonably good trade in the cleaning product. **Captivated by what they have seen and heard people are willing to give it a go.**

So often we make doubt seem so negative. 'I doubt it'. 'Such a dubious character'. 'It's doubtful'. But it needn't be. When you doubt your blood test results you talk about them with your doctor. When you doubt the safety of some electrical equipment, you have it checked. Doubt is essential when something really matters. Doubt is not taking for granted what you're told or you're assuming or believing.

How do we test what is true? The phone caller says 'I am from your bank. I need your account details to transfer the interest from your ISA.' The headline claims an exclusive: 'local MP says hospital should close'. With so much fraudulent activity and fake news, how do we test what is true? Truth isn't always obvious, even when there's no intention to deceive or scaremonger. Truth is never one person's claim. I could ring the bank for myself. I might email my MP. Truth is tested by questions, conversations, doubts. As it was by the first followers of Jesus, when one of them made the most astonishing claim and another wasn't so sure.

One thing we learn about **Jesus from the Gospels is how good a storyteller he was**, and how he captivated people's attention. Crowds flocked to hear him. Now we can't all be top, funny, compelling, witty speakers with all the banter. And none of us is Jesus! But we know that we are all called to tell people the story of Jesus. And if we think that it is important to do so - and hopefully, we all do! - how can we 'deliver our pitch' in a way that is more exciting and interesting and compelling than a cleaning product? How did you get hooked?

If the resurrection is such a big deal, such a life changing event, why are the disciples still stuck in the same place? What difference has the empty tomb made? How has it changed them? Has it let them see themselves and their world differently? Has it done anything for them? It doesn't look as if it's made much difference. They are in the same house behind the same locked doors as a week ago. What's changed?

We wonder, one week after Easter, what has Christ's resurrection done? Is life different? Do we see and engage the world in new ways? What difference has the empty tomb made in our lives over the last week? And when I look at the world it looks pretty much the same as before.

Today's gospel is telling us:

- Christ's resurrection is a big deal.
- The empty tomb is a life changing event.
- The resurrection does make a difference in our lives; and
- It also takes time.



Resurrection takes time. It is not a onetime event. It's something that we grow into. It's a process. It's a way of being and a life to be lived. By the grace of God, we evolve into resurrected people through our relationships and the circumstances of our lives. God wastes nothing. Every day we are stepping into the resurrected life. It's not always easy and some days are just plain hard.

Maybe we need to let go of the fact of the empty tomb and start claiming the story of resurrection. There's a difference between facts and story. Facts are one dimensional, stories are multidimensional. Facts inform the mind: stories touch the heart. Facts transmit information, stories transform lives. Think about it like this. A fact is static, like a snapshot of a particular moment in time. A story is dynamic, like a movie that takes us across time. The empty tomb is a fact. Resurrection is a story. Maybe we need to begin to understand resurrection as the movie of our life instead of a snapshot of Christ's life. The fact of the empty tomb is not the story of the resurrection. The facts of Jesus life are not the story of Jesus. The facts of your life and my life are not the story of our life.

The facts are just the starting point for the story. The fact of the empty tomb is the starting point for the resurrection story. Whatever facts you woke up to on Easter Monday are simply the starting point for your story of resurrection. Too often, however, we take the facts as the entire story. Isn't that what we've done with Thomas?

What do you know about Thomas other than what you have read today? He was a doubter. "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." That Thomas doubted may be the only fact that comes to mind. It is so prevalent that we call him Doubting Thomas. What if that fact, however, is just the starting point for his resurrection? What if it is not the whole story? What if where we start is less important than where we go, where we end?

Do you know what happened to Thomas next? Thomas headed out to the east, towards India. He was the apostle who took the story of Jesus to the people of India. He spoke, he encouraged, he gave testimony, and he told the facts about Jesus. Sometime later he died a martyr after he was run through with five spears by five soldiers. That doesn't sound much like a doubter, does it? It sounds like someone who grew and changed, someone for whom the resurrection of Christ was real, someone for whom the empty tomb made a difference. It just took a little time, as it does for most, maybe all of us.

We know Doubting Thomas but let's not forget Thomas the believer. At the point where he met Jesus, he acknowledged who Jesus was with their words: "My Lord and my God!" and began his life anew. *Doubting Thomas became Believing Thomas* - he became captivated, and it changed his life.

Let us pray. Easter God, we give thanks, not only for the joyful news of resurrection, but also for the different ways in which different people came to believe that it was true; that it didn't come instantly or easily to any of them, and for some, like Thomas, it involved questioning and defiance, because if it was by some strange chance true, it was too important to accept on hearsay.

We give thanks for all seekers after truth in every realm of human enquiry: science, mathematics, astronomy, history, philosophy. Thank you for their questions and their lateral thinking; for their refusal to accept what other people have told them, or even to trust their own theories without evidence to back them up. Thank you for their willingness to be proved wrong. We pray for those whose search is for less tangible truths: about the meaning of life; and the best way to live; and whether or not there is a God; and whether God can be known. May they be as rigorous as the best scientists in their questioning; as honest about what they do not know; as open to admitting that their version of truth may not be the whole or the only one.

We pray for those who, like Thomas, would love to be able to believe as others do, but find it hard; those who once believed, but now no longer do; those who have been put off believing by the apparent certainty of those who seem to have all the answers and do not understand their questions; those who see their own doubts as failure, and not a necessary part of growth.

For the royal family mourning the loss of the Duke of Edinburgh. For the staff who have been Covid-secure with the family, giving all the care and support they could. And as we pray for them, we give thanks for the life of Prince Philip, for his devotion to our Queen and his family, for his devotion and duty to our country and the commonwealth and beyond. For his steadfastness and his community support and engagement and for his faith and witness. We also pray today for families we know mourning the loss of a loved one. We know its not an easy time and so we ask for your love to surround those who grieve. Gracious God, we are called to do our living and believing in times very different from those first heady days after Easter. Blessed are those, Jesus said, who believe without seeing. Bless all who worship today, in Jesus name. Amen.

Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - CH4 519 Love divine

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Love divine, all loves excelling. Joy of Heaven to Earth come down.
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling, All Thy faithful mercies crown
Jesus, Thou art all compassion, Pure, unbounded love Thou art
Visit us with Thy salvation, Enter every trembling heart 2 Breathe, O breathe, Thy loving spirit, Into every troubled breast
Let us all in Thee inherit. Let us find that second rest
Take away the love of sinning, Alpha and Omega be
End of faith, as its beginning. Sets our hearts at liberty. 3 Come almighty to deliver, Let us all Thy life receive
Suddenly return and never, Never more Thy temples leave
Thee we would be always blessing, Serve Thee as Thy hosts above
Pray, and praise Thee without ceasing, Glory in Thy perfect love 4 Finish then Thy new creation, Pure and spotless let us be
Let us see Thy great salvation, Perfectly restored in Thee
Changed from glory into glory, 'Til in Heaven we take our place
'Til we cast our crowns before Thee, Lost in wonder, love and praise | CCLI 620398 |
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May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all evermore. 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