

# 17<sup>th</sup> April 2022 – Morning Service

## Easter Sunday

Andy Haynes

### Call to Worship

He is Risen – **He is Risen indeed Alleluia**

*The Lord is my strength and my defence; he has become my Salvation. Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous. The Lord's right hand hath done mighty things! The Lord's right hand is lifted high. The Lord's right hand hath done mighty things! I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the Lord has done. (Psalm 118 v 14 – 17)*

### Song - I know that my Redeemer liveth from Handel's Messiah

I know that my redeemer liveth	I know that my redeemer liveth	I know that my redeemer liveth
And that he shall stand	And though worms	For now is Christ risen
At the latter day, upon the earth	destroy this body	from the dead
Upon the earth	Yet in my flesh shall I see God	The first fruits of them that sleep
	Yet in my flesh shall I see God	Of them that sleep

George Frideric Handel

CCL No. 515642

For those who didn't manage to participate in any reflections concerning Good Friday:

### Reading: Isaiah 53:1,3-7

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?  
He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.  
Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.  
Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.  
He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

For without death there can be no resurrection; without sacrifice there can be no new life; without punishment there can be no justification, without suffering there can be no reconciliation, without the cross there can be no Easter celebration!

### Prayer of thanks and praise

Alleluia! Jesus is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! May this declaration resound throughout our churches and our land, touching the lives of all whom we meet. May it be forever the truth of which we speak. How blessed is this day, when earth and heaven are joined and humankind is reconciled to God!

God our Father, on this Easter day we gather together to offer You our thanks and praise and adoration for the wonderful gift of Your Son, the Lord Jesus. We thank you Lord, that Easter is not about a people, but all people, that your love and your Salvation are for all who confess with their voices, their hearts and their lives, that the tomb is empty. And that it is empty because Jesus is risen, and that through His death and resurrection we might know forgiveness; that our lives might be reborn in Him, that Your name may be glorified forever. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We praise you for this light of new life made possible through Him.

Gracious God, we thank You for Your word, the Holy Bible, the book of life, which contains the answers for which men and women are seeking. We thank You for the record of Christ's ministry and teaching. We praise you for the first witnesses of resurrection. In Your great mercy Lord, You have granted us this new birth by Your grace, which leads to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. It is reserved in heaven for all of us who believe in the power of the resurrection, to all whose faith means that salvation is freely given. We pray that the Easter light of life, hope and joy, will shine in our hearts for eternity.

Eternal, empowering, Holy One, we praise you for the promise and fresh energy that this Easter story brings, and we are thankful that Jesus continues to show himself to us in new ways today. **Amen.**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

### **StF 309 – See what a morning**

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!

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!

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!

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### **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. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 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? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" Then they remembered his words.

When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. 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.

### **StF 298 – Christ the Lord is risen today**

- 1) Christ the Lord is risen today; Alleluia!  
All creation joins to say: Alleluia!  
Raise your joys and triumphs high; Alleluia!  
Sing, you heavens; let earth, reply: Alleluia!
- 2) Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!  
Fought the fight, the battle won; Alleluia!  
Vain the stone, the watch, the seal; Alleluia!  
Christ has burst the gates of hell: Alleluia!
- 3) Lives again our glorious King; Alleluia!  
Where, O death, is now your sting? Alleluia!  
Once he died our souls to save; Alleluia!  
Where's your victory, boasting grave? Alleluia!
- 4) Soar we now where Christ has led, Alleluia!  
Following our exalted Head; Alleluia!  
Made like him, like him we rise; Alleluia!  
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies: Alleluia!
- 5) King of Glory! Soul of bliss! Alleluia!  
Everlasting life is this, Alleluia!  
You to know, your power to prove, Alleluia!  
Thus to sing, and thus to love: Alleluia!

*Charles Wesley CCL No. 515642*

### **Sermon – Part 1**

So there's a bloke out jogging and he got too close to the edge and tripped and fell over the precipice. But as he was falling he managed to catch hold of a silver birch sapling that was growing in the rock crevice. As he hung on, the tree was creaking under his weight. Help! He cried, 'Is there anybody there?' I'm here, said God – just let go of the branch. There was a pause, the chap looked up, then he looked down! He looked up again, and then he shouted 'Is there anybody else there?' The point being, we don't always see things the way God does. Our minds are inferior to His, we don't see the bigger picture, and often when we pray for things we are praying for our will to be done – and not that of God.

Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane for God's will to be done. And here we are, over 2000 years later still being moved by the way God planned things. So today, as we look at the facts surrounding the resurrection, I wonder how many of us would have arranged things differently? You could have Jesus walking into the chief priest's office following His resurrection and proving to Caiaphas how wrong he was. Can you imagine the shock on his face? Or Jesus could have gone round all Jerusalem until everyone had seen the nail prints in His hands and feet. And I wonder even then, how many would refuse to believe? He could have stormed into Pontius Pilate and proved to him what truth is! But that's not how God works. He gives us choices. And Jesus responds to those who seek Him. And so I ask - are we seeking Him this morning?

Let's look at the events of that first Easter morning. Luke tells us that the women went to the tomb with spices. They found the stone rolled away, and no body to be found. Then we are told in verse 4 "While they were wondering about this, two men whose clothes gleamed like lightning stood beside them" While they were wondering .....What was going through their minds do you think? Jesus, their friend, their teacher, their hero had been crucified. That was a tragedy for them; but now to add insult to injury His body was missing. They would be distraught, confused, upset, worried, traumatised. They couldn't begin to figure things out. And yet, Jesus had told them what was going to happen. Hadn't they heard Him? Perhaps they didn't want to hear Him?

Unfortunately for Jesus, 2022 years later we are still the same. And while we are wondering ..... or wandering. His church is on the demise. His kingdom shrinks, the light has gone out, there is no beacon shining for Him. It's not only the women who were wondering though, if we turn to the last verse in today's reading, we find someone else wondering too.

v12 *"Peter 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."* Peter finds himself wondering, just as the women were wondering. Had he forgotten what Jesus had told him would happen? Or didn't he believe what Jesus had said? Lack of trust and faith perhaps? Is there anyone there? Is there anyone else there? God's ways are greater than our ways. Man's wisdom is foolishness in His sight. We have to turn to greater things to begin to understand. The last few days had been horrific for these followers of Jesus, and there seems no joy for them in this scene of events.

Some years ago a Christian lady came up to me and said 'I believe that Jesus was raised from the dead, I don't have a problem with that, but I don't really know what that means for me'. We see things in the flesh, we miss the divine if we're not careful. We would love to go on living here in this earthly life with this earthly body because it's what we know and what we understand. But we need to understand the greater things of God. And we know and learn of God through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. And we get a full understanding of sin and forgiveness and mercy and grace through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Let's return to these followers of Jesus in our story. It takes some divine intervention to get these women to understand what's happened. Two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning. And as they bowed down before them, these heavenly messengers reminded them of the words of Jesus, verse 7

*"The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again."* Now they remembered His words, now they go back to tell the disciples, now we sense the mood changing, the joy coming into play, the excitement beginning to show. When suddenly – bang! Wallop! A smack in the teeth. What do we read? Verse 11 *"But they did not believe the women ..... Their words seemed like nonsense"*

It's what we face today isn't it? People don't believe. They don't understand our faith They don't want to hear about Jesus – and so we get deflated, our enthusiasm wanes and we stop telling anyone the good news! And because we then become Christians of apathy, when anyone meets us they are not going to see Christ in us! The question the heavenly messengers ask of the women is being asked of us today – verse 5 *"Why do you look for the living among the dead?"* For if we are not living out this gospel message, if we are not following the teachings of Jesus, if we are not full of hope and reassurance, if we have no confidence in Christ then we become dead to Him and his salvation and dead to the kingdom cause.

We have to move on a few verses in Luke's gospel to find that it took the presence of Jesus himself to convince these disciples. Luke 24 v 26 *"While they were still talking... Jesus himself stood among them and said 'Peace be with you' V 40 & 41 "When He had said this He showed them His hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement ....."* Now, whilst it seems they are still trying to make sense of it all but haven't quite grasped it, we do see the first sign of the joy and amazement that they should have felt.

Are we filled with joy and amazement at the magnitude of these events? Have we grasped the full significance of it all yet? Because if we truly have why aren't we more excited by it and more enthusiastic to share it with others? For that is the only way others will get to know of Him, and the only way His church will grow! Look at these following verses:- V 45 *"Then he opened their minds so they could understand the scriptures."* V46&47 *" This is what is written ..... repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations .."* V48 *"You are witnesses of these things."*

Are we witnesses for Christ? We should be, for just as it took Christ to stand among his disciples before they believed, so Christ is alive today and wants to live within us giving hope and joy. It's because He lives that we can all face tomorrow.

## Song – God sent his Son

- 1) God sent His Son, they called Him Jesus;  
He came to love, heal and forgive.  
He lived and died, to buy my pardon.  
An empty grave is there to prove  
My Saviour lives!
- 2) How sweet to hold our new-born baby  
And feel the pride and joy he gives;  
But greater still the calm assurance,  
This child can face uncertain days  
Because He lives!
- Ch) *Because He lives, I can face tomorrow.  
Because He lives, all fear is gone;  
Because I know He holds the future,  
And life is worth the living,  
Just because He lives!*
- 3) And then one day I'll cross that river,  
I'll fight life's final war with pain.  
And then as death gives way to vict'ry,  
I'll see the lights of glory  
And I'll know He reigns.

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## Sermon – Part 2

So my friends, the joy of Easter isn't just for the holiday weekend, but it is for all eternity. For because Christ lives, so shall we live also. God is making all things new. And when Jesus returns he will not be riding on a humble donkey, but will come riding on a white horse (Revelation 19 v 11). On His head will be many crowns. And he wears the name 'King of Kings and Lord of lords'. Revelation 21 v 4 *"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away"*

Is this our focus? Is this my focus? Or do we prefer to focus on the things of the flesh, this temporary existence, giving greater priority to this 3 score years and 10? As I said in the beginning - God gives us choices. The purpose of this life is to make that choice. I hope and pray you will choose Christ this day, and know the full measure of His love for You, for He came (as John 10 v 10 tells us) that you may have life, and have it to the full! Amen.

## Song – The Hallelujah Chorus from Handel's Messiah

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!	King of kings
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!	(Forever and ever Hallelujah! Hallelujah!)
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!	And Lord of lords
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!	(Forever and ever Hallelujah! Hallelujah!)
For the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth	King of kings
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!	(Forever and ever Hallelujah! Hallelujah!)
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!	And Lord of lords
The kingdom of this world	(King of kings and Lord of lords)
Is become the kingdom of our Lord	And He shall reign, And He shall reign
And of His Christ, and of His Christ	And He shall reign forever and ever
And He shall reign for ever and ever	Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

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## Prayers of Intercession

Lord without the resurrection of your son our faith would be empty and without hope, but he is alive and we rejoice in the knowledge that in Jesus all that separates, injures and destroys has been overcome by that which unites and heals and creates. We pray for your Church worldwide, and realize that our language race and nationalities may be different, but our worship and our praise is one, may we be, and remain, united in Christ. Lord, on this special day grant us peace in your world for countries where there is war and communities that are broken.

L: Lord in Your mercy R: Hear our prayer.

We especially think about the people of Ukraine at this time, the way that their lives are being destroyed by the Russian invasion, and ask now that you comfort them and strengthen them in their hour of need, and look with pity on those who suffer. We ask that you be merciful to them and pray for any help that can be given to ease this tragic situation. We thank you for all those who have offered help and support to the many refugees, mainly women and children displaced by the war, and pray for this nation that's been torn apart. We pray, as always, for our brothers and sisters around the globe who suffer persecution just because of their faith, and remember those words of Jesus when He said 'Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' We give thanks for their great witness and pray they will feel Your presence with them; give them strength and courage as they bear suffering for Your names sake.

L: Lord in Your mercy **R: Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those living in our own country, especially those on the poverty line who are suffering more due to high energy and fuel prices, which contribute to causing high inflation. We pray for politicians and leaders, asking that You will give them the wisdom required for the tasks they face. We think of your church here in our country, and pray that she will be a strong witness. We pray for all the churches in our circuit, that together we will be a light to our communities. We trust and pray that our witness will be effective in winning souls for the kingdom, and we give You thanks for calling us into the company of fellow Christians. We pray that your spirit may guide and strengthen us all in mission and service.

L: Lord in Your mercy **R: Hear our prayer.**

Lord we pray for ourselves, for You know the needs of human life, and You know what hinders the work of the kingdom. As we seek to follow Your example, help us by your presence to overcome our hasty speech that hurts others, to be free from greed and selfishness, from pride and jealousy that spoil relationships. Help us to be humble, loving and caring, concerned for the feelings of others, to be gentle and always ready to say sorry. You know us Lord bring out the best in us so that our lives may reflect your ways, that day by day we may draw closer to You, experiencing more of Your love for us. We pray now for the sick, that You would heal their infirmities, for the lonely, that in You they would discover the perfect friend, for the bereaved, that in the midst of their sorrow they will be comforted. May all who struggle know Your presence with them in their time of suffering. Ever living God help us now to celebrate our joy in the resurrection of Jesus and to express in our lives the love of Christ, our Risen Saviour!

L: Lord in Your mercy **R: Hear our prayer.**

### **StF 313 – Thine be the glory**

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|--|---|
| 1) Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,<br>Endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won;<br>Angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,<br>Kept the folded grave-clothes where<br>thy body lay: | 2) Lo, Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb;<br>Lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and gloom;<br>Let the church with gladness hymns of<br>triumph sing,<br>For her Lord now liveth, death hath<br>lost its sting:            |
| Ch) <i>Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,<br/>Endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won.</i>   | 3) No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of Life;<br>Life is nought without thee: aid us in our strife;<br>Make us more than conquerors through<br>thy deathless love;<br>Bring us safe through Jordan to thy<br>home above: |

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### **Blessing**

Go forth in the knowledge and power of the resurrected Christ, to love and serve the Lord in order to do His will and extend the kingdom here on earth. **Amen.**