

# 4<sup>th</sup> April 2021 – Morning Service

## Easter Day

Rev Helen Croft

### Call to Worship

Alleluia! Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

Alleluia! Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

We thank you that Easter is not about a people, but all people.

We thank you that your love and your salvation are for all who confess with voices, hearts and lives.

We thank you that the tomb is empty because Jesus is risen.

We thank you that we might know forgiveness.

We thank you that lives might be reborn and your name glorified now and for eternity. **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!
- 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!
- 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!

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### Reading: John 20:1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look[a] into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."' Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

## **Sermon**

Hindsight is a wonderful thing – so the saying goes. But what is hindsight? The dictionary tells us, hindsight is the understanding of a situation or event only after it has happened or developed. And this for us as 21st-century readers is what we have in these Scripture verses. The story of Resurrection Sunday; a day that we know and celebrate as being what Jesus said he would do - rise from the dead - was very different for his followers at the time. Let's for a moment, put ourselves in the shoes of those women that went to the tomb. They had just witnessed Jesus being put to death and having the breath of life leave him. His body was taken down and put into a cave with a colossal stone in front of it. All their hopes, dreams and imaginations had been shattered and it wouldn't surprise me, if there was confusion amongst them. In these few verses, I'd like to suggest that we see the progress of faith. We see:

- Faith eclipsed (verses 1 - 2)
- Faith dawning (verses 3 - 10)
- Faith shining (verses 11 - 18 )

### ***Faith eclipsed***

In John's account only one woman is mentioned – Mary Magdalene – a woman who had been delivered from seven demons and was part of the group that followed Jesus and his disciples around and probably supported them. The other Gospel accounts either indicate or mention additional women. But whether there is one or a few women, it doesn't matter. What matters is that they were returning to life before Jesus – getting on with what was familiar to them. Just like the disciples did when they went fishing - the account can be found in John 21. They were going back to what was familiar. For the women, the familiar was undertaking a Jewish custom, of going to anoint the body with various spices. As they journeyed there, it is likely they would have discussed how were they going to remove the stone. They hadn't remembered Jesus words - that he would rise from the dead. On arriving at the cave, they found the stone rolled away and upon entering the tomb was empty, the body gone. For Mary the only thing she could think was that Jesus's body had been stolen. Mary runs to tell the disciples what has happened.

It is significant that the first witnesses of the resurrection of Christ were believing women. Among the Jews of the day, the testimony of women was not held in high regard. "it is better that the words of the law be burned" said the rabbi "than be delivered to a woman". These women had a greater message than that of the law, for they knew their Saviour was alive. Mary's faith was not extinguished, it was only eclipsed. The light was there, but it was covered. Mary's faith would soon move out of the shadows into the light.

### ***Faith Dawning***

On hearing the news of Jesus body being gone, Peter and John run to the tomb. John hesitates at the entrance and looks in. But Peter, he darts straight in, like a bull in a china shop. For all they knew, they could have been entering a trap. Inside, Peters sees the grave clothes neatly folded. John in writing the word 'seeing' uses three different Greek words in this account:

- Verse 5 – he uses the verb which means ‘to glance in, to look in’
- Verse 6 – he uses the word which means ‘to look carefully, to observe’
- Verse 8 – he uses the word which means ‘to perceive with intelligent comprehension’

What the disciples are seeing is developing and their resurrection faith was now dawning. They were slowly beginning to remember Jesus’ words that he said he would rise from the dead. Their faith was based on evidence.

For us living thousands of years later, we are unable to examine the material evidence – the tomb, the grave clothes. But we have the record in the Word of God – and that record is true. In fact, it is faith in the Word that the Lord really wanted to cultivate in His disciples. Peter and John saw the evidence and believed. That evening, they would meet Jesus personally. Faith that was eclipsed has now started to dawn and the light will get brighter.

***Faith shining***

Peter and John leave the garden but Mary lingers, Proverbs 8:17 says ‘*I love them that love Me; and those that seek Me early shall find me*’. Mary loved her Lord and came early to the garden to express that love. Peter and John had gone back home. Psalm 30:5 tells us ‘*weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning*’. Mary’s weeping was the loud lamentation, so characteristic of Jewish people when they express their sorrow.

There is certainly nothing wrong with sincere sorrow, because God made us to shed tears, and weeping is good therapy for broken hearts. The sorrow of the Christian, however, must be different from the hopeless sorrow of the world because we have been born again ‘unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead’ (1 Peter 1:3 NASB). Jesus knew that Mary’s heart was broken and that her mind was confused. He did not rebuke her but tenderly revealed himself to her. All he had to do was speak her name and immediately Mary recognised Him. Mary wanted to relate to Jesus as she and the disciples had done previously but he revealed his new state of glory. Jesus had a job for Mary to do – to go tell his brethren that he was alive. This meant, that they now shared His resurrection power and glory. Mary’s sorrow (mourning and weeping) had turned to joy. And she reported it to the disciples. Mary’s faith had gone from eclipsed to dawning and was now shining because Jesus was alive and she had seen him. The living Christ shared his living word – Christ is risen! Hallelujah!

Just as Mary and the disciples were changed by their experience of encountering Jesus, so to we should be changed by our encounters with Jesus. When we encounter the living Christ, we shouldn’t return to the way things were before meeting him because we have been changed. Our faith, should be like that of Mary’s going from being eclipsed, to dawning to shining – in other words, it should be growing more and more. As the first century believers were changed by their encounter with the risen Christ, so to should be. Christ is risen! Hallelujah!

**StF 303 – I know that my Redeemer lives**

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|---|---|
| <p>1) I know that my Redeemer lives-<br/>         What joy the blest assurance gives!<br/>         He lives, he lives, who once was dead;<br/>         He lives, my everlasting Head.<br/>         He lives, my everlasting Head.</p>       | <p>3) He lives, and grants me daily breath;<br/>         He lives, and I shall conquer death;<br/>         He lives, my mansion to prepare;<br/>         He lives, to lead me safely there.<br/>         He lives, to lead me safely there.</p> |
| <p>2) He lives, to bless me with his love;<br/>         He lives, to plead for me above;<br/>         He lives, my hungry soul to feed;<br/>         He lives, to help in time of need.<br/>         He lives, to help in time of need.</p> | <p>4) He lives, all glory to his name;<br/>         He lives, my Saviour, still the same;<br/>         What joy the blest assurance gives,<br/>         I know that my Redeemer lives!<br/>         I know that my Redeemer lives!</p>          |

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## Prayer of Praise & Intercession

Sovereign God, sometimes it seems too good to be true - the cross, the empty tomb and the promise of a new life for all eternity. There are times, when for all our faith, we struggle to accept it; not because we don't want to but because we want to so much, and we wonder whether we are fooling ourselves, telling ourselves what we want to believe. Yet you remind us today that this is precisely how the apostles felt until they met with the risen Christ and knew the truth for themselves, not as speculation but as an indisputable experience. Rekindle our faith this Easter time. Assure us, through experiencing again the presence of the risen Christ within our hearts, that with you nothing is too good to be true, for you are able to do more than we can ask or imagine. To you be praise and glory, now and for evermore. **Amen**

Renewing and life-giving God, as we celebrate again your victory over death and your triumph over evil, open our hearts today to the way you are able to change our lives and transform our world. Remind us of your resurrection power all around us, bringing hope out of despair, joy out of sorrow, peace out of turmoil and love out of hatred, and in that faith may we live now and trust for the future, assured that nothing can defeat your purpose or deny the life you offer for all eternity, through Jesus Christ our lord **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 302 – He has risen

*Ch) He has risen  
He has risen  
He has risen  
Jesus is alive.*

1) When the life flowed from His body  
Seemed like Jesus' mission failed;  
But His sacrifice accomplished  
Vict'ry over sin and hell.

2) In the grave God did not leave Him  
For His body to decay,  
Raised to life -- the Great Awakening,  
Satan's power he overcame.

3) If there were no resurrection  
We ourselves could not be raised,  
But the Son of God is living  
So our hope is not in vain.

4) When the Lord rides out of heaven,  
Mighty angels at His side,  
They will sound the final trumpet,  
From the grave we shall arise.

5) He has given life immortal  
We shall see Him face to face;  
Through eternity we'll praise Him,  
Christ the champion of our faith.

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## Blessing

May the Spirit of truth lead us into all truth, give us grace to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and to proclaim the word and works of God. And the blessing of God - Spirit, Son and Father - remain with us always. **Amen**