

A service for 19th April, 2026 (Easter 3) (StF)

Call to Worship: Psalm 117

Praise the LORD, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples. For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD. Amen.

Our opening hymn was written by American flautist and music-editor Don Fishel (b 1950). It was composed in 1971 for the Roman Catholic charismatic "Word of God Community" in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA, of which Fishel was the music leader. It quickly grew in popularity and was published hymnals used by Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist and Roman Catholic churches throughout the English-speaking world. Hymn number 295, 'Alleluia, Alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord,'

Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord,

Alleluia, alleluia, give praise to his name.

1. Jesus is Lord of all the earth;

He is the King of creation: *Chorus*

2. Spread the good news o'er all the earth:

Jesus has died and has risen: *Chorus*

3. We have been crucified with Christ;

Now we shall live for ever: *Chorus*

4. God has proclaimed the just reward;

New life for all! Alleluia! *Chorus*

5. Come, let us praise the living God,

Joyfully sing to our Saviour: *Chorus*

© Don Fishel (1950 -)

Let us pray.

Amazing God, we worship and adore you with joyful hearts as we celebrate the resurrection of our Saviour Jesus Christ. You formed the heavens and earth with awesome power and you made us to share the beauty and wonders of this planet, to be your earthly children. Instead, we turned ourselves against you, despite your efforts to draw us back to you through the Commandments and the prophets.

In boundless grace you sent Jesus to become the One Perfect Sacrifice to atone for the sins of this world. Through Jesus' resurrection we are offered eternal life through faith in him, not through our own merit or works. God most gracious and holy, hear and accept our worship this morning and help us set aside all distractions and anxieties, so we may worship you in spirit, love and truth.

Thank you, O Lord, for this beautiful world that you created for us, for all the good things we enjoy. Most of all, thank you for coming as Jesus Christ and for loving us, even when we are unloving and unlovable, for without your grace, we would be hopeless and lost.

Merciful Father, forgive us for the sins we have committed and for the good we have failed to do, for we know what terrible suffering our Lord Jesus bore to take away the burden of human sin. Help us change from self-centred to Christ-centred living.

In sure confidence that you have heard our prayer and have restored us in your sight, we thank you, Lord. May we serve you and our neighbours joyfully and faithfully,

following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, so we may bring light and goodness to a sin darkened world. Amen.

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

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 next hymn was written by the prolific and long-lived Methodist minister, Revd, Fred Pratt Green. Hymn number 314, 'This joyful Eastertide'

**1. This joyful Eastertide,
What need is there for grieving?**

Cast all your cares aside

And be not unbelieving: *Chorus*

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: *Chorus*

3. Then put your trust in Christ,

In waking and in sleeping.

His grace on earth sufficed;

He'll never quit his keeping: *Chorus*

© Fred Pratt Green (1903 – 2000)

We come to our prayer of intercession. Let us pray for people nearby and far away.

Heavenly Father, our celebrations of Christ's resurrection are tempered by the heart-breaking brokenness of this wonderful planet, caused mainly through our failure to live as you want us to. We acknowledge that the very selfishness, pride, greed, cruelty and indifference that led Jesus to Calvary is largely responsible for the world's problems. Lord, help us to serve you in Jesus' holy name, but we know that our power is limited, whereas yours is infinite. Therefore, we pray that you will influence people with greater power and influence to do what we cannot. Nevertheless, we bring you our concerns in Jesus' precious name.

Lord, there are so many conflicts in the world, the consequences of which are far-reaching and not only for the warring parties, but for the wider world. Jesus entered Jerusalem as Prince of Peace, died and was raised offer salvation to all-comers. Therefore, in his name we are bold to ask that the leaders of those nations learn to negotiate a just ending of conflicts. We pray for the victims of warfare, persecution, prejudice and discrimination, asking you to ease their suffering and help them rebuild what strife has destroyed, so they may live in peace and security.

We remember people in our community who are needy or troubled: those who are sick in body, mind or spirit, all who are lonely, anxious and burdened by unemployment,

addiction, broken relationships or bereavement: people who are at the end of their tether. In a time of silence, we offer you names of people for whom we are particularly concerned.

Loving Lord, wherever possible enable us to offer them practical support, but embrace them with the healing of your love, so they may experience the real peace that only you can give.

Lord, hear our prayer for the Church, here and throughout the world. Give us the faith we need to stand firm when we are challenged or mocked. Keep us steadfast and loving in good times and bad. Keep us as loving in the face of opposition, as was our Saviour, so we may be bearers of the good news of God's love for everybody.

Abba, heavenly Father, may your blessing rest upon us, our families and friends. Help us to overcome the trials of life and to rejoice in the risen Lord Jesus. Keep us safe, but most of all, help us to share the abundance of your love with everyone we meet, in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

We continue with a hymn by Michael Peterson, published first in "The United Methodist Hymnal" in 1987. Hymn number 307, 'On the day of resurrection'

1. On the day of resurrection

**To Emmaus we return;
While confused, amazed and frightened,
Jesus come to us, unknown.**

**2. Then the stranger asks a question,
'What is this which troubles you?'
Meets us in our pain and suffering;
Jesus walks with us, unknown.**

**3. In our trouble, words come from him;
Burning fire within our hearts
Tells to us the scripture's meaning
Jesus speaks to us, unknown.**

**4. Then we near our destination.
Then we ask the stranger in,
And he yields unto our urging;
Jesus stays with us, unknown.**

**5. Day of sorrow is forgotten
When the guest becomes the host.
Taking bread and blessing, breaking,
Jesus is himself made known.**

**6. Opened eyes, renewed convictions,
Journey back to scenes of pain;
Telling all that Christ is risen.
Jesus is through us made known.**

© Michael E. Peterson

The Gospel reading is Luke chapter 24 verses 13 to 35

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened.

As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?”

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

“What things?” he asked.

“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.”

He said to them,

“How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread. Amen.

Marty Haugen is a prolific American hymn-writer, who was raised in the American Lutheran Church, yet found his first position as a church musician in a Roman Catholic parish at a time when the Roman Catholic Church was undergoing profound liturgical and musical changes after Vatican II. Finding a vocation in that parish to provide accessible songs for worship, he continued to compose and to study. A number of liturgical settings were prepared for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. He is composer-in-residence at Mayflower Community Congregational Church in Minneapolis. We sing hymn number 308, ‘On the journey to Emmaus’

**1. On the journey to Emmaus with our hearts cold as stone –
The One who would save us had left us alone.
Then a stranger walks with us and, to our surprise,
He opens our stories and he opens our eyes.**

**2. And our hearts burned within us as we talked on the way,
How all that was promised was ours on that day.
So we begged him, 'Stay with us and grant us your word.'
We welcomed the stranger and we welcomed the Lord.**

**3. And that evening at the table as he blessed and broke bread,
We saw it was Jesus arisen from the dead;
Though he vanished before us, we knew he was near –
The life in our dying and the hope in our fear.**

**4. On our journey to Emmaus, in our stories and feast,
With Jesus we claim that the greatest is least:
And his words burn within us – let none be ignored –
Who welcomes the stranger shall welcome the Lord.**

© *Marty Haugen (born 1950)*

Address: “The Emmaus Walk”

The killing of Osama Bin Laden, fifteen years ago, provoked a variety of reactions, from triumphal joy for many Americans to quiet satisfaction that one of the most notorious terrorists could no longer work his evil. However, I was deeply moved when a reporter spoke to a relative of one of the three thousand victims of the attack on the World Trade Centre in September, 2001. The relative was the wife of a fireman who had perished as he tried to rescue workers from one of the twin towers. Far from being jubilant, the wife declared that Mr. Bin Laden's death wouldn't bring her husband back and her life and those of her two children had been left in ruins for the past decade. For her nothing, not even the death of the man who engineered her husband's doom, could raise her spirits.

In many ways Cleopas and his friend would have been as despairing as they left Jerusalem at the end of the Passover two thousand years ago. They were certainly followers of Jesus, who had regarded him as the Messiah and had gone with him into the Holy City a week earlier amid the adulation of the massed crowd. Both had probably expected salvation would involve freedom from occupation, power and importance rather than a return to holiness.

What actually occurred left them inconsolable. Surprisingly to his friends, Jesus had ridden into Jerusalem on a young donkey, like the King in ***Zechariah chapter 9***,. Within a week, Jesus had been betrayed by Judas, abandoned by his friends, the cries of '**Hosanna!**' changed to '**Crucify him!**' Certainly they never envisaged Jesus submitting to his enemies like a lamb to the slaughter. They probably hid in the same barred room that the other disciples had hid themselves away, terrified of being discovered and sharing the same fate as their Master. Imagine how they must have felt on the morning of the third day when the women had gone to finish anointing Jesus' body in the tomb after the Sabbath had ended. First, Mary Magdalene returned, crying that Jesus' body had been taken from the tomb. Peter and John had gone to investigate, but had returned none the wiser, then all the women had reappeared shouting that the Lord had risen! Luke's gospel recorded that the disciples did not believe the news of the resurrection from the women, so we can imagine how poisonous the atmosphere must have grown in that room –unbearable enough for Cleopas and his friend to want to leave for home – whatever the risk.

So there they were, plodding along, despondent that what had begun as a great adventure had ended in ashes of hopelessness: their Messiah killed as a common criminal; neither revolution nor salvation and, to cap it all, the body had disappeared from the tomb! Emmaus was 160 stadia, or twenty miles north-west of Jerusalem, so they had considerable time to try to make sense of what had happened, but as they

walked, they were overtaken by a figure who asked what they were discussing, much to their amazement, for the crucifixion of Jesus had been the talk of Jerusalem for the past three days.

The stranger's reaction was to rebuke them: **“How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?”** This man went on to explain how the prophets had pointed to the way in which God's salvation would come through Jesus. By the time they reached their home, it was near sunset, but Cleopas and his companion had clearly so enjoyed the conversation with the stranger that they offered him hospitality at their house. Even then they clearly did not recognise the risen Jesus until he broke the bread and blessed it – as well a learned guest might be asked to do. The way he did it revealed the stranger to be the risen Christ, yet before they could embrace him, or question him, Jesus had gone, leaving them to reflect upon what had happened. Notice how, like the Wesleys at Aldersgate, their hearts were said to have been warmed as the mystery of the cross was revealed to them. God's salvation had come through sacrificial love, not through brute force, for when Jesus had appeared weakest, nailed to the cross, unable even to brush away the flies that tortured him as they fed on his blood, his power was strong enough to break Satan's power. God's generous love invites us to follow; it does not coerce us.

What message does the encounter on the Emmaus Road have for us? Just as Mary recognised the risen Christ when he called her by her name, so Cleopas and his friend realised his identity when Jesus performed a familiar action – probably reminding them of his eucharistic command. In other words, we can encounter Jesus in the ordinary parts of our lives – we don't need mountain top meetings, or Damascus Road experiences. We can meet Christ in other people, too, when we give or receive help, when we share communion, or when we pray. Remember, when we do see Christ in our neighbours, like Cleopas and his companion, our hearts will be warmed with his love.

The apparent defeat of Christ on the cross became his great victory over the power of evil in this world. Even when situations seem hopeless, they are not beyond the reach of God in Jesus, for the resurrection means that Jesus has triumphed over sin and the Last Enemy, death. God has the last word: he has triumphed and will continue to do so; Jesus' blood means that we are at one with God. Have our inner eyes been opened, so that we recognise the risen Lord in our daily life and do we answer Christ's call to share the Good News in what we do and say? May we have the faith to persevere, even when all seems lost, for as with Cleopas and his companion, the risen Christ walks with us on our life journey and he won't let us down. Amen.

We shall close our worship with a hymn by Revd. Samuel Medley, an Eighteenth Century Pastor at Byrom Street Baptist Church in Liverpool, who as a young man had no time for God and served in the Royal Navy until he was seriously wounded.

It was whilst he was being tended back to health by his pious grandfather that Samuel found Christ. This hymn makes one of the greatest statements of faith at Easter. We shall sing hymn number 303, ‘I know that my Redeemer lives – ’.

**1. I know that my Redeemer lives –
What joy the blest assurance gives!
He lives, he lives, who once was dead;
He lives, my everlasting Head.**

**2. He lives to bless me with his love;
He lives, to plead for me above;**

He lives, my hungry soul to feed;
He lives, to help in time of need.

3. He lives and grants me daily breath;
He lives, and I shall conquer death;
He lives, my mansion to prepare;
He lives, to lead me safely there.

4. He lives, all glory to his name;
He lives, my Saviour, still the same;
What joy the blest assurance gives,
I know that my Redeemer lives!

© *Samuel Medley {1738 – 1799}*

Benediction

May the risen Lord Jesus fill our hearts to overflowing with joy; may the power of the Holy Spirit be our guide and strength and may the love of God the Father be ours in abundance, so we may take his blessing to a world that dearly needs it, in the risen Lord Jesus' name. Amen.