

Easter Service

12th April 2020

You may wish to light a candle.

Opening Sentences

'The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has risen, as he said'. Matthew 28. 5,6.

In your resurrection, O Christ, let heaven and earth rejoice. Alleluia!

Invitation to Confession -

Christ died to sin once for all, and now he lives to God.

Let us renew our resolve to have done with all that is evil

and confess our sins in penitence and faith.

Romans 6.10

Like Mary at the empty tomb,
we fail to grasp the wonder of your presence.

Like the disciples behind locked doors,
we are afraid to be seen as your followers.

Like Thomas in the upper room,
we are slow to believe.

May the God of love and power
forgive you and free you from your sins,
heal and strengthen you by his Spirit,
and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Collect

God of glory, by the raising of your Son you have broken the chains of death and hell: fill your Church with faith and hope; for a new day has dawned and the way to life stands open in our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Bible Readings



Epistle – Acts 10:
34-43

Then Peter began to speak to them: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality,

but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'

Gospel – John 20: 1-18 The Resurrection of Jesus

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.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look 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 – Rev Anne Taylor – see below

Prayers

We pray for all who are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, for those in our own

parish, and for those who live in countries where healthcare is limited and poverty brings bigger challenges. May God grant us all the gift of an open-heart and a generous and compassionate response to those in need. Amen.

Lord, we pray this Easter that the declaration 'Christ is risen' may resound not only in these walls but touch the lives of all we meet and be the truth of the Jesus we speak of. May your love now spread its sweet perfume in this place and wherever it is shown. Amen.

Lord, we ask you to lay a healing hand upon all those who are sick. We pray especially for Amanda, Barbara, David, Eileen, Gordon, Graeme, Polly, Sam, Steve & Jane, Tom, Tony and all those who need our prayers today. Make your loving presence known to those who are lonely. Give your strength to those who feel weak. May those who lack be filled, those who mourn be comforted, those who worry be calmed and those who seek new life find it in Jesus Christ; through whom we pray. Amen.

God of Resurrection, you have rolled the stone away and the tomb of our world has been opened wide. With the dawn has come a new creation. Let our celebrations today empty our tombs, renew our lives and release your power; through the risen Christ we pray. Amen.

The Peace

The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then were they glad when they saw the Lord. Alleluia.
The peace of the Lord be always with you

Taking of the Bread and Wine

It is right, it is our duty and our joy, at all times and in all places to give you thanks and praise,
holy Father, heavenly King, almighty and eternal God, through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

But chiefly are we bound to praise you because you raised him gloriously from the dead.

For he is the true paschal lamb who was offered for us, and has taken away the sin of the world.

By his death he has destroyed death, and by his rising to life again he has restored to us everlasting life.

Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Accept our praises, heavenly Father, through your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, and as we follow his example and obey his command, grant that by the power of your Holy Spirit these gifts of bread and wine may be to us his body and his blood; who, in the same night that he was betrayed, took bread and gave you thanks;
he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, after supper he took the cup and gave you thanks; he gave it to them, saying:

Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

Therefore, heavenly Father, we remember his offering of himself made once for all upon the cross; we proclaim his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension; we look for the coming of your kingdom, and with this bread and this cup we make the memorial of Christ your Son our Lord.

Through him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, with all who stand before you in earth and heaven, we worship you, Father almighty, in songs of everlasting praise:

Blessing and honour and glory and power be yours for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

**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.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

Though we are many, we are one body, because we all share in the one bread.

Prayer after Communion

Living Lord, we remember with gladness how on the day of your resurrection you appeared to your disciples in your risen power and said to them 'peace be with you'. Speak that word

to our hearts today. Lift us above all our doubts and fears and help us so to be aware of your risen presence that your peace and hope may be with us now and forever. **Amen**

The Blessing

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, through the power of the Holy Spirit; and the blessing of God almighty, the father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you, and all who you care for this day and always. **Amen.**

SERMON FOR EASTER DAY – Rev Anne Taylor

EASTER DAY 2020 Rev Anne Taylor

Fear, apprehension, isolation, social distancing and lockdown are all conditions we are very familiar with at the moment.

Fear of the future; apprehension as to when and how it will all end.

Isolation: a few weeks into restrictions and the uniqueness has well and truly worn off. Are there any weeds left to pull in the garden. The grass doesn't grow quick enough to keep cutting. I bought paint for someone in my house to keep him from getting bored!

Social distancing and lockdown: we're finding that virtual contact is really no substitute for being able to socialise with others. Though I have been impressed with those who have grabbed new technology in a way they had never dreamt to help them keep in touch. We now have a ZOOM congregation who will continue to worship together each Sunday evening and if you want to join them please let me know. For others what I have just said will sound like another language and we have to look at lots of different ways to keep in touch with each other.

For different reasons, the early disciples experienced isolation and vulnerability. With the disciples the uniqueness of our situation is also bringing fear and worry for loved ones. Tension and stress on relationships. Fear of what the future brings.

The bottom fell out of the disciples' lives with the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus. Was this how it was all going to end? Full of fear and apprehension, each of them eventually making their way back to the safety of the house where they had celebrated the Last Supper with Jesus.

In the verse after this morning's Gospel reading John says that the disciples kept the door of the house locked for fear of the Jews.

Were they the next to be arrested and tried and crucified? Yes, that first Easter weekend they experienced fear, apprehension, isolation, social distancing and lockdown.

When Mary Magdalene brought the news that the stone had been rolled away and that the tomb was empty, Peter and John broke their self-imposed curfew and ran to the tomb, finding it just as she had said.

And whereas Jesus first revealed himself to Mary Magdalene in the garden, it was not until that evening that he came to the disciples, hiding away in the Upper Room, showing them his wounded hands and side, proving that he was risen and alive.

And in the 50 days between Easter and Pentecost, Jesus appeared many times to them, though their self-imposed lockdown was not lifted completely until after they had received the Holy Spirit.

In those appearances after Easter, Jesus was the same but different.

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus didn't physically recognise Jesus as they walked along with them. They only knew it was Jesus when he blessed and broke bread with them that evening. Although the disciples had the doors firmly secured and locked where they were staying, Jesus came and stood among them – not once but twice. Even in the garden that Easter morning, Mary Magdalene, as close a disciple of

Jesus as you could get, didn't recognise him at first and thought he was the gardener.

Jesus was the same but somehow different. By rising from the dead he was no longer constrained by physical limitations.

Too many he was the same – he walked and talked, he ate and drank – but yet different.

Jesus was changed by the Resurrection.

And when the lockdown from the dangers of coronavirus is lifted, will we not be changed as well?

As we pick up the threads of normal life once more, will we not, because of all that has happened through this pandemic, will we not be different to some extent?

Having not been able to sit with friends in their need, will we not value friendship more than ever?

Many people have not been able to visit loved ones in hospital, even when they are dying. And what a gut-wrenching experience that must be! In the future will not family ties and mutual support become more important?

We haven't been able to worship together in church. Someone has said that churches bear the imprints of the past, have borne witness to birth and death, joy and sorrow, peace and war over many generations and so are places of hope and comfort. I hope that when we return we will appreciate even more not only the strength of spirit that meeting together for worship brings but also the inspiration that emanates from our church of St Peter's where people have worshipped for over 273 years.

Restricted in movement for too long, will we not appreciate the beauty of sea and countryside more than ever and work to conserve our natural resources?

As the atmosphere has become less polluted and poisoned. Will we not begin to understand the difference changed lifestyles can make, even if imposed on us by a pandemic? Yes relationships may well change as we have seen the best and worst in people but whatever our experience we need to build on it.

The resurrected Jesus was not just the same as before. He had changed.

When we rise out of all the restrictions of our present situation – as one day we will – will the experience of fear, apprehension, isolation and social distancing and lockdown make us better humans and Christians?

Let us hope and pray that it will.

We cannot praise too much the front-line workers – all the NHS staff who have given themselves unstintingly, the care workers, the shop workers, those who deliver post, refuge collectors, teachers – all who have put themselves at risk for the benefit of others. Scientists, researchers and engineers have working to find solutions. Those who have given so generously to the Foodbank. The neighbour offering to shop, the phone call to keep someone company and I could go on. All of these people hugely outweigh those who through carelessness and selfishness have put others at risk.

In the changed life after the pandemic may that spirit of selflessness, love and care predominate and make us better people. Easter is about hope.

To the disciples full of fear, apprehension, locked behind the doors of their house, isolated and in lockdown, the Risen Jesus appeared and said, **"Peace be with you."**

Soon they were out in public, changed men and women, preaching and living a Gospel of love and hope. Their lives and the lives of countless millions, then and since, were renewed and revitalised as they saw what was really important in life.

The Queen was a little more concise than I have been! But my prayer now and in the weeks ahead is that we will be Easter people, from whose hearts the stone of fear has been rolled away and who want to celebrate God's love and hope for each and every one of us. Amen.