

## Easter Day Service

4<sup>th</sup> April 2021

with Peter Widdess



### Personal preparation before the service begins.

Please take time to remember wherever you are, we are all in the presence of God as one community. Give thanks and become still in the presence of God

### Prelude: Taizè Halleluja

### Greeting

Alleluia. Christ is risen.  
**He is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

### Song

*Thine be the glory  
Risen conquering Son  
Endless is the victory  
Thou o'er death hast won*

Thine be the glory  
Risen conquering Son  
Endless is the victory  
Thou o'er death hast won  
Angels in bright raiment  
Rolled the stone away  
Kept the folded grave clothes  
Where Thy body lay

*Thine be the glory  
Risen conquering Son  
Endless is the victory  
Thou o'er death hast won*

Lo Jesus meets us  
Risen from the tomb  
Lovingly He greets us  
Scatters fear and gloom  
Let the church with gladness  
Hymns of triumph sing  
For her Lord now liveth  
Death hath lost its sting

*Thine be the glory  
Risen conquering Son  
Endless is the victory  
Thou o'er death hast won*

No more we doubt Thee  
Glorious Prince of life  
Life is nought without Thee  
Aid us in our strife  
Make us more than conquerors  
Through Thy deathless love  
Lead us in Thy triumph  
To Thy home above

*Thine be the glory  
Risen conquering Son  
Endless is the victory  
Thou o'er death hast won*

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## **Gloria in excelsis**

Glory to God in the highest,  
**and peace to his people on earth.**  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
almighty God and Father,  
**we worship you, we give you thanks,  
we praise you for your glory.**  
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,  
Lord God, Lamb of God,

**you take away the sin of the world:  
have mercy on us;**  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:  
**receive our prayer.**  
For you alone are the Holy One,  
**you alone are the Lord,**  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,  
**with the Holy Spirit,**  
**in the glory of God the Father.**  
**Amen.**

### **A prayer of confession**

Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord,  
we come to you in sorrow for our sins,  
and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.  
We have lived by our own strength,  
and not by the power of your resurrection.  
In your mercy, forgive us.  
**Lord, hear us and help us.**  
We have lived by the light of our own eyes,  
as faithless and not believing.  
In your mercy, forgive us.  
**Lord, hear us and help us.**  
We have lived for this world alone,  
and doubted our home in heaven.  
In your mercy, forgive us.  
**Lord, hear us and help us.**

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 for Easter Day**

Lord of all life and power,  
who through the mighty resurrection of your Son  
overcame the old order of sin and death  
to make all things new in him:  
grant that we, being dead to sin

and alive to you in Jesus Christ,  
may reign with him in glory:  
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit  
be praise and honour, glory and might,  
now and in all eternity.

**Amen**

**The reading is taken from 1 Corinthians 15.1-11.**

Let us prepare ourselves for the word of God  
**Our hearts and our minds are open.**

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

This is the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## Song

Sing Hallelujah to the Lord  
Sing Hallelujah to the Lord  
Sing Hallelujah, sing Hallelujah  
Sing Hallelujah to the Lord

Jesus is risen from the dead  
Jesus is risen from the dead  
Jesus is risen, Jesus is risen  
Jesus is risen from the dead

Jesus is Lord of heaven and earth  
Jesus is Lord of heaven and earth  
Jesus is Lord, Jesus is Lord  
Jesus is Lord of heaven and earth

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## Gospel acclamation

Jesus Christ is risen from the dead.  
**Alleluia.**  
He has defeated the powers of death.  
**Alleluia.**  
Jesus turns our sorrow into dancing.  
**Alleluia.**  
He has the words of eternal life.  
**Alleluia.**

## Hear the gospel according to Mark 16, 1-8

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a

white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

“Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’” Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

Jesus Christ is risen from the dead.

**Alleluia.**

He has defeated the powers of death.

**Alleluia.**

Jesus turns our sorrow into dancing.

**Alleluia.**

He has the words of eternal life.

**Alleluia.**

## Homily

Today is Easter Day, a day for joy and celebration. The Lord is risen. Christos anesti. Christus resurrexit. Der Herr ist auferstanden. All over the world in many different languages Christians are sharing in the good news of the triumph of Jesus over the powers of evil, over death.

And yet... Mark’s Gospel doesn’t end with joy and celebration. The final sentence is “They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.”

Now you may well say: the gospel doesn’t end there. There are a further 8 verses in the bible before the end of Mark’s Gospel.

This is true, but they were only added to Mark’s Gospel long after it was in circulation. The earliest manuscripts of the gospel end with those strange words “they were afraid”. This closing of the gospel has caused discomfort to Christians wanting to celebrate the resurrection with joy for many hundreds of years. The other gospels each go their own way in telling the story of Easter. We know this, and therefore it is important for us to let Mark tell the story in his own way. We

should trust him that he knows what he is writing, and ask for ourselves what we can learn from his way of describing the resurrection of Jesus.

Let us follow the women in the story.

Mark tells us at the end of the previous chapter that they were there on the Friday at the crucifixion of Jesus. They had witnessed how his body had been taken from the cross and that evening how Joseph of Arimathea had buried Jesus in a tomb cut out of the rock of the hillside. Joseph had then had a large stone placed on the entrance to the grave. The women had seen everything, and at the same time they were well aware that the body of Jesus had not been cleaned or anointed, a duty which elderly women, as they were, would traditionally fulfil.

Then comes the Saturday, the last day of the week, the Sabbath, the day of rest. On that day they could do nothing.

So on the Sunday, the first day of the week at day break they go to the grave. They knew where it was, and they knew that there was a large stone on the grave. On the way to the grave they were discussing how to move this stone, whether they would need help or not. In what follows at the graveside, just hear the verbs which Mark uses for the women: they were alarmed, they were trembling, they were bewildered, they fled, they said nothing, they were afraid.

This was their reaction to the vision of an angel who tells them: You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen!

The women could see that the body of Jesus was not there, but the words "he has risen" meant nothing to them. Their desire was to clean and anoint the body and the words "he has risen" was not the answer they needed or were looking for. We are conditioned through 2000 years of Christian devotion to automatically connect risen with joy. But if we look not only at Mark's story of the resurrection, but also at the versions of the other evangelists we will see that none of those involved automatically connected empty graves, or visions of angels who tell of Jesus rising up, with a belief and joy in the resurrection. Mark expresses very clearly a reaction of bewilderment,

alarm and fear. If we look, we will find this reaction in the other gospels too.

There are two ways of understanding this reaction:

Firstly the whole story of the death and resurrection of Jesus is a dread-full and awesome story. Even when we try to see the story alone through the filter of love, redemption and salvation we cannot cover up or hide the elements of brutality and power politics on the one side and, on the other, the ways of this world being turned upside down in the resurrection. It is at the very least a story which leads to trembling and fear. In this sense the reaction of the women is completely understandable and justified. Mark and the early Christians knew this only too well in their own experience. For Mark and his first readers his closing the gospel with “they were afraid” made sense.

Secondly the exchange between the women and the angel went wrong because the women wanted to know where the body is, and the angel wanted to tell them the gospel, the good news of Jesus rising from death, a category mistake: the right answer for the wrong question. Very often our sharing of the gospel with others, our preaching and teaching, our communication with non-believers, even those interested in learning more about faith in Jesus, suffer because we don't hear what people say to us or want to ask us, because we know what we want to say to them.

Telling and hearing the good news of the resurrection need time, reflection and sensitivity. Mark's angel tells the women to share with their friends that they should go to Galilee, where Jesus will be waiting for them. We can understand for the friends of Jesus that this time from the Easter until Ascension and Pentecost is a time of hearing, learning and understanding. It is a spiritual journey, a time of moving from “he is risen” to in Paul's words, “Christ died for our sins and was raised on the third day according to the scriptures”.

Paul needed a long time to get to the point where he could say that. He writes in his first letter to the Corinthians, describing himself as someone who doesn't deserve to be called an apostle, because he had persecuted the first Christians. What they were preaching and saying about Jesus was not what he wanted to hear, and they were not answering his

questions. His resurrection moment was on the road to Damascus where he had been authorised to arrest the Christians and bring them as prisoners to Jerusalem. His vision of the risen Lord didn't bring understanding but blindness and dumbness. In the Acts of the Apostles we can read how he needed help to overcome his blindness, to learn to see and understand what had happened. But his spiritual journey, his go to Galilee phase, needed several years before he became the Apostle whom we know.

What I am suggesting is that the joy of the resurrection is not instant and obvious. It needs to grow in us so that we can begin to live in and with the dread and the awe, and perceive and grow in the love and forgiveness which is resurrection for us. We need to reflect on our dealings and discussions with others whether we are hearing what is being said to us, what we are being asked, and whether our answers are the right ones for the questions asked or whether our language of faith is so automatic that we are not addressing the people with whom we are together. In this sense I wish all of us a happy and joyful Easter, this day and every day. And then there will be no need to say of ourselves – we were afraid.

### The creed

We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is,  
seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation he came down from  
heaven,

was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary  
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the  
dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and  
glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of  
sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come.

**Amen.**

### **Song: Be Unto Your Name**

We are a moment You are forever  
Lord of the ages God before time  
We are a vapor You are eternal  
Love everlasting reigning on high

*Holy holy Lord God Almighty  
Worthy is the Lamb Who was slain  
Highest praises honor and glory  
Be unto Your name  
Be unto Your name*

We are the broken You are the healer  
Jesus Redeemer mighty to save  
You are the love song we'll sing forever  
Bowing before You blessing Your name

*Holy holy Lord God Almighty  
Worthy is the Lamb Who was slain  
Highest praises honor and glory  
Be unto Your name  
Be unto Your name*

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Gary Sadler | Lynn DeShazo  
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## **Intercessions**

(by Wolfgang)

“Marley was dead, to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. (...) Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.”

This, as you will have noticed, is the beginning of Charles Dickens’ famous Christmas Carol, and I believe there is a direct relation to the two readings of today. It is bad enough to lose somebody, especially if they were dear to us. At the same time, the certainty of burial does provide a bitterly reassuring closure, as in Dickens’ story. Whether we want it or not, we all learned to believe in the certainty of death at some point. Which is where the story of Easter comes in. Weird. Disturbing. “Risen from the dead” – not really likely. And yet we see nature awakening as from a deadly slumber, bursting into new life all around us. Lord, we pray: fortify us with Spring-time energy so that we are ready to believe in life rather than in death.  
Lord in your mercy – **Hear our prayer**

Believing in life is a huge part of Christianity – Jesus said “I am life” as well as “I am love” We celebrate his birthday in connection with winter solstice and the returning sun, and Easter with ancient rites of fertility. Lord, we are grateful for your love – help us to accept it as a much-needed shot in the arm, both metaphorical and physical  
Lord in your mercy – **Hear our prayer**



## Blessing

God,  
who through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ  
has given us the victory,  
give you joy and peace in your faith;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit  
be upon you and remain with you always.



## Dismissal

Alleluia. Christ is risen.  
**He is risen indeed. Alleluia.**  
Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
**He has given us new life and hope.**  
**He has raised Jesus from the dead.**  
God has claimed us as his own.  
**He has brought us out of darkness.**  
**He has made us light to the world.**  
Alleluia. Christ is risen.  
**He is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

## Song - My Redeemer Lives

I know He rescued my soul  
His blood has covered my sin  
I believe I believe  
My shame He's taken away  
My pain is healed in His name  
I believe I believe

I'll raise a banner  
'Cause my Lord has conquered the grave

*My Redeemer lives*  
*My Redeemer lives*  
*My Redeemer lives*  
*My Redeemer lives*

You lift my burdens  
I'll rise with You

I'm dancing on this mountaintop  
To see Your kingdom come

*My Redeemer lives*  
*My Redeemer lives*  
*My Redeemer lives*  
*My Redeemer lives*

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Reuben Morgan

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