

Our Sunday Service Together

May 8th 2021



An Easter Acclamation

Praise be to God in the highest. It is our duty and our joy, always and everywhere to give you thanks, almighty and eternal Father, and especially in these days of Easter to celebrate with joyful hearts the memory of your wonderful works.

For by the mystery of his passion Jesus Christ, your risen Son, has conquered the powers of death and hell and restored in men and women the image of your glory. He has placed them once more in paradise and opened to them the gate of life eternal.

And so earth and heaven resound with gladness, while angels and archangels and the powers of all creation sing for ever the hymn of your glory.

Preparation

All: This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Through the brokenness of Christ, we become one body
as one body we now gather in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to receive God's holy word, to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Our Confession

Let us come to the light of Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

All: 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, 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, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone, and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

Be still for a moment in confession and in receiving God's Grace in Christ

All: May Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive us our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Risen Lord. **Amen.**

The opening prayer

All: The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

All: As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and for ever. Amen.

The Psalms Psalm 23 *We say the psalm aloud*

The Lord is my shepherd; therefore, I will not be in want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters.
He shall refresh my soul and guide me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me;
you have anointed my head with oil and my cup shall be full.
Surely goodness and loving mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

Scripture Reading Acts 9.36-43

³⁶ Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. ³⁷ At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. ³⁸ Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, 'Please come to us without delay.' ³⁹ So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. ⁴⁰ Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, 'Tabitha, get up.' Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. ⁴¹ He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. ⁴² This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. ⁴³ Meanwhile he stayed in Joppa for some time with a certain Simon, a tanner.

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Gloria

All: 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.

The Gospel John 10.22-30

²² At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³ and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. ²⁴ So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.' ²⁵ Jesus answered, 'I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; ²⁶ but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ The Father and I are one.'

at the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

A Reflection for the day

'No one will snatch them from my hand' says Jesus of his 'sheep', not even death is able to rob the flock of Tabitha in the story from Acts. Here is the reality of the resurrection!

A new reality exists in the world, in the universe, following Easter and its events. Through the cross and resurrection, a new nature 'reality' is at work in the world, and amongst the Messiah's people, his sheep, his followers, those baptised by water and Spirit, be they Jew or gentile (Tabitha/Dorcus was of gentile heritage).

As the book of Acts unfolds we find the early church discovering this new reality; the oneness they have with God in Christ. They experience the continued ministry of God loving the world through the Son whose body they now seem to be in the world; whose Spirit seems to be present with them. They are finding that with the Good Shepherd they are want for nothing, for though there is darkness and death still stalks the land, God is with them, he directs them, his way is secure and his leadership provides sustenance, peace and life always.

Here is the reality of the resurrection! Life in the world is still filled with experiences that bring darkness and death, but God is not absent in these times. It is often too easy to think of John's Phrase 'eternal life' as some sort of endless disembodied after death bliss. However, when he wrote his words the common Jewish belief was quite different and looked for a 'coming age' when all wrongs would be put right, sins forgiven, death defeated and God would be 'all in all'. This is the kingdom Jesus speaks of, and demonstrates, and the early church came to see becoming a reality for them – God 'all in all'.

This is the 'new life' the Good Shepherd calls his sheep to enter into; not one day, sometime in the future, but now 'on the way', in the darkest valley, by the still waters – God 'all in all'. This is the reality the disciples found in Christ. For St Paul, even though life was tough at times, dangerous, life threatening on occasions he found

God was 'all in all' and writes for us in Romans 8; 'I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord'.

The discovery of the disciples was that Jesus' resurrection was not just for him alone or a sign of what would be one day in the distant future, it came there and then to all who believed – Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free, without favour. The resurrection brought the possibility of the life of tomorrow 'in God' to the now of their every day – it was Kingdom Come. This takes some learning 'on the job'; the challenge we see time and again is for the disciples to be open to 'receiving' this new life, this kingdom come. They find the daily need is to be open to being the sheep of the shepherd, to look for, and welcome his presence, his rod and staff on the journey – especially when it seems darkness is all about. This is discipleship - in faith to be open to the possibilities of God with us in the Spirit; God 'all in all'. It is to daily be open to the possibility of the power of the resurrection at work in us, transforming us into his glorious nature; one degree after another. This is our calling, to receive new life in Christ and his kingdom come.

We are challenged just as Peter, Paul, John and all the first disciples were challenged and encouraged by them also to be open to this 'new life', to the kingdom come, to the power of the resurrection, to God being 'all in all'.

The Creed

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Prayers *We make our intercessions*

Jesus, Good Shepherd, we come to you, true guardian of our souls.
Keep your Church firmly focused on you and your Kingdom.
Draw us more closely in unity and fellowship in your name.
The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing.

Jesus, Good Shepherd, we come to you, our true defence.
Give us courage to place our trust in following your way of peace...
Draw the nations closer in a commonwealth of shared humanity.
The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing.

Jesus, Good Shepherd, we come to you, true owner of all wealth.
Open the hearts and purses of all, that as we have richly received, so we may be generous in our giving...
Grant us the grace to liberate others and raise those who are oppressed.
The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing.

Jesus, Good Shepherd, we come to you, with the injured and the weak.
Protect and hold in your love all who cry to you in their need...
Revive us in your mercy.

The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing.

Jesus, Good Shepherd, you lay down your life for our salvation.

Gather us in our final hour to your eternal fold...

As you know us, so may we hear you call us by name in your Kingdom.

*Goodness and loving mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. Amen*

The Collect

All: Risen Christ, faithful shepherd of your Father's sheep: teach us to hear your voice and to follow your command, that you're your people may be gathered into one flock, to the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

All: 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.

The Conclusion

All: Christ, as a light illumine and guide me this day.
Christ, as a shield overshadow me.
Christ under me, Christ over me; Christ beside me on my left and my right.
This day be within and without me. Amen.