

Our Sunday Service Together

Easter 2 April 16th 2023



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 Psalmody Psalm 16 *We say the psalm aloud*

Preserve me, O God, for in you have I taken refuge; I have said to the Lord, 'You are my lord, all my good depends on you.'

All my delight is upon the godly that are in the land, upon those who are noble in heart.

Though the idols are legion that many run after, their drink offerings of blood I will not offer, neither make mention of their names upon my lips.

The Lord himself is my portion and my cup; in your hands alone is my fortune.

My share has fallen in a fair land; indeed, I have a goodly heritage.

I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel, and in the night watches he instructs my heart.

I have set the Lord always before me; he is at my right hand; I shall not fall.

Wherefore my heart is glad and my spirit rejoices; my flesh also shall rest secure.

For you will not abandon my soul to Death, nor suffer your faithful one to see the Pit.

You will show me the path of life; in your presence is the fullness of joy and in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.

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 2.14a – 22 and 32

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them:

'You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. For David says concerning him, "I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover, my flesh will live in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence." 'Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, "He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption."

This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

“The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’”
Therefore, let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.’

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 20.19-31

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ ²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’

²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord.’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.’

²⁶A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.’ ²⁸Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ ²⁹Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.’

³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

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

The resurrection of Jesus is a unique event and was so unexpected that even the disciples were taken by surprise even though Jesus had tried to prepare them. So it is interesting to see how readily those who actually experienced the risen Christ accepted him. At first there was a certain amount of confusion, but in our reading we are told that in spite of the locked doors the risen Jesus came and talked with them bringing them peace and commissioning them to go and preach the gospel of good news.

On the other hand, Thomas, who wasn't there, found it hard to believe and was not convinced by the other disciples' story. He had to rely on a second-hand account which he didn't find convincing even though it was from his close friends. And that of course is our situation – we can never actually meet the risen Jesus and have to rely on the biblical account. Many people find this very difficult bought up as we are in a materialistic and scientific culture. So Jesus' next appearance when Thomas was there is very significant because he immediately recognised Jesus and no longer felt the need to see the marks of the nails but simply responded 'My Lord and my God!'.

I always feel that history has been very unkind to Thomas labelling him 'Doubting Thomas'. I prefer to think of him as courageously voicing the reservation so many of us share and getting the answer we also need. I like to think of him as 'Honest Tom' posing the difficult question even though he might suffer the ridicule of his friends. He asked for proof and was given it. The experience of Thomas has helped believers to rejoice in the resurrection with amazing results. We can see the lives of people in every generation inspired and changed. We can see a world which has been profoundly influenced by the life and teaching of Jesus. We can see a church which, despite its divisions, weaknesses and failures, still witnesses to him after two thousand years. I believe those with eyes to see can still see God at work in the world. And finally, a delightful postscript to the story of St Thomas. When the first missionaries went to India in the 18th C, to their surprise they found a flourishing Christian Community there already. The tradition of that church is that St Thomas had travelled there and founded the church which still proudly bears his name. So for them and for me, he isn't Doubting Thomas, but a much-respected founding father of the Church.

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*

O God of peace, who has taught us that in quietness and confidence shall be our strength; help us, as we come into your presence, to be still and know that you are God.
In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ let us pray to the Father.

As we continue this season of Easter let us pray that our faith will grow and develop. *Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.*

We pray for Bishops Michael Ruth and all laity and clergy who seek to serve you in this diocese May they be filled with the Spirit and speak with authority. *Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.*

As we remember St Thomas, we pray for all those who have doubts about their faith that they may have the courage to ask the difficult questions and find adequate answers. *Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.*

We Pray for King Charles as he prepares for his coronation, the Prime Minister, and all World leaders, that they may have the Spirit of wisdom to lead us through this difficult time. *Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.*

We pray for our families, friends, and neighbours that we may serve Christ in one another and seek the common good. *Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.*

We pray for the sick, suffering, dying and those who mourn and we give thanks and pray for those who care for them. *Lord in your mercy. Hear our prayer.*

Rejoicing in the fellowship of all your saints, we commend ourselves and the whole creation to your unfailing love.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and for evermore. Amen.

The Collect

All: Almighty Father, you have given your only Son to die for our sins and to rise again for our justification: grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness that we may always serve you in pureness of living and truth; through the merits of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **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.