

# Our Sunday Service Together

April 21<sup>st</sup> 2024

Easter 4

## 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 23 *We say the psalm aloud*

The Lord is my shepherd; therefore, can I lack nothing. 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 4.5-12

The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, <sup>6</sup> with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. <sup>7</sup> When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, 'By what power or by what name did you do this?' <sup>8</sup> Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers of the people and elders, <sup>9</sup> if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, <sup>10</sup> let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. <sup>11</sup> This Jesus is "the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone."  
<sup>12</sup> There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.'

*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 10.11-18

<sup>11</sup> 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. <sup>12</sup> The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. <sup>13</sup> The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. <sup>14</sup> I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, <sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. <sup>16</sup> I have other sheep that do not belong to this

fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. <sup>17</sup> For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. <sup>18</sup> No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.'

*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

*Revd John Webb writes*

During my time as a padre I was privileged to spend quite a lot of time in Cyprus. The first time was a UN tour way back in 1972 when conditions were fairly basic and before the development of the tourist facilities. I had to go to some of the poorer parts and I felt as if I was back in biblical times with the people living much as they would have lived in Israel at the time of Jesus. This was particularly true of the shepherds who were very different from those I saw when I was sent to the Yorkshire Dales. The shepherds lived with their sheep – not just visiting them when necessary. They would lead their sheep – not drive them with dogs or quadbikes. The sheep were not fenced in but could wander freely and needed constant attention to stop them straying. They were vulnerable to attack from wild animals. They could be taken by thieves and robbers. The shepherd would know every sheep by name and they would know and recognise him. It would have been normal for him to think of their welfare before his own safety. So this is the image of a shepherd which Jesus listeners would have had when he said 'I am the Good Shepherd' – someone who was in a unique relationship and totally committed to the welfare of his flock.

To Jesus' hearers it would have been dramatically different from the image of God presented by the Pharisees who was the God of arbitrary power, the ten commandments, and eternal punishment. That is a picture of God which can be found in the Old Testament and still in popular thought to-day. I suggest that it is the idea of God rejected by atheists and agnostics. As the good shepherd Jesus rejected the model of power and choose to identify himself with some of the least respected members of society. That his vocation was not to be served but to serve.

Jesus draws a distinction between the good shepherd and the man who doesn't own the sheep but simply looks after them for payment and runs away when challenged. Jesus is the good shepherd who comes to serve and if necessary lay down his life for the sheep. The word translated 'good' doesn't quite catch the meaning of the word that Jesus used which can sound cold and hard and moralistic. But it carries the idea of 'beautiful', about the attractiveness of what Jesus is doing. When he calls people want to come just to be near him. The point of calling Jesus 'the Good Shepherd' is to emphasise the strange compelling power of God's love to which we are invited to respond.

## 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 think of Jesus as the Good Shepherd let us pray for our Bishops and clergy that they may be faithful shepherds to the church and community. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

Strengthen Michael our Bishop and all laity and clergy who seek to serve us in this diocese. May they be filled with the Spirit and speak with authority. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We Pray for Our King, Prime Minister, and all World leaders, that they may have the Spirit of wisdom to lead us through this difficult time. We pray for all the experts and scientists who have the difficult task of giving simple advice on complex issues. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for the hungry and starving, that the available food may be used for the benefit of all. *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 our schools, the children, teachers, and support staff. We pray for all those responsible for religious education that they may inspire those they teach. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for the sick, suffering and dying ..... and we give thanks and pray for those who use their skill and risk their lives to care for them. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

Hear us as we remember those who have died..... According to your promises grant them a share in your eternal kingdom. *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 God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life:  
raise us, who trust in him, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness,  
that we may seek those things which are above, where he 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.