



March Team Ministry

March Team St John, St Mary, St Peter, St Wendreda

Welcome

Easter Sunday ~ 4th April 2021

Alleluya ! Christ is risen ! He is risen indeed ! Alleluya !

Please keep in touch with one another, and I am always glad to hear from you on 01354 279232 or at andrew.marchurch@gmail.com

We have Church services with social distancing, both our regular Sunday Services, and the special ones for this Holy Week. This week we offer two Meditations; one for Palm Sunday, and one on the Passion which may choose to save for later in the week.

St Peter's Sundays 8am & 11am; Wednesdays 10am

St Mary's Sundays 9.15am

St John's Sundays 9.30am; Tuesdays 10am

"Stay in touch, take care, keep safe, continue praying and God bless."

Easter Sunday Prayers

O God, your saving plan has brought us to the glory of this day. Slaves, we become your sons and daughters; poor, your mercy makes us rich; sinners, you count us among your saints. Bring us to know the place that is ours in the unfolding story of your purpose, and instil in our hearts the wonder of your salvation. Grant this through Jesus Christ our Passover and our peace, who lives and reigns with you now and always in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.

Amen

Living Lord, whose love displaced the gravity of stone; you entrusted women, who loved beyond death, with news of resurrection: we praise you for the open gospel which ends where Easter faith begins; accept our fear, our disbelief and take us into this new world led by the risen Son; through Jesus Christ, the firstborn of the dead.

Amen

Paul's letter the Philippians 3 v8-15

More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you.

Paul's 2nd letter the Corinthians 5 v14-17

For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

Meditation

I reckon I have preached every Easter at one or more services for the last thirty years, almost invariably starting with whichever Gospel account has been read that year. Long before the Gospel writers told the Easter stories of the empty tomb and the appearances of the risen Christ, Paul wrote his letters, so perhaps it is about time I started there. Paul's letters don't include those stories, no empty tomb, no locked upper room, no women or disciples finding stones rolled back, discarded lined cloths or mistaking Jesus for someone else. Perhaps, if we were to ask Paul, "Why not?" he would say 'I am not concerned with questions of the "when?" and "where?" and "how?'. I am concerned with the reality of the experience, and NOW not then.' If we pressed further we might get 'All I know is Christ and the power of his risen life, and it is an experience that causes me to rethink what I believe to be possible and entirely change my idea of God!'

What Paul had been blind to, and now sees with an astonishing and grateful wonder, is that there is no limit to God's ability to create and to redeem; to recreate and to affirm those whom he has made. For, perhaps, the most valued ingredient of love, is to affirm the person we love. Not even death can destroy God's vision for us. God is not a monster; he's a lover. He does not offer us the gift of life only to snatch it back again. He does not create us in his own image, only to allow that image to be smashed beyond repair. God does not reveal himself in Jesus to prove what may be all too obvious; that life is often unjust, and death cruel or violent, rather he comes to affirm that what he creates will not in the end be destroyed.

There are some phrases which make me cringe, with sentiments like "he put an end to death" from our liturgy, or "endless is the victory thou o'er death has won" from hymns, or when people choose poems at funerals that imply death is nothing of significance. Death is real; death is momentous; a journey into the dark unknown, the end of all we have known. But, what Easter proclaims is a God who has made us people of flesh *and* spirit; unique and precious to him, and who will not let go of us. We are to trust this God who is able to recreate, to raise up, each of us in some new, unimaginable way. In Christ each of us is called into a relationship with God that not only goes to the very depths of our being, but also extends beyond our deaths. It is for here and the hereafter. It is for now and then (by then, I mean life eternal).

If, in this written piece, I am neglecting the traditional Easter stories of the Gospels for the earlier witness of Paul; 'All I know is Christ and the power of his risen life', it is to point away from the "when?" and "where?" and "how?", to the reality of the experience that is NOW. The experience of the Resurrection, the glimpsing that Jesus Christ is now in the midst as a life giving Spirit, creates the Church. No other event, no other experience, so changes the face of history. No Easter, no Church; indeed no Easter no Christianity. It's as simple as that. In Christ crucified and risen, God does something quite new. He makes us rethink who we are and what our ultimate end is to be. Paul, again, 'So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation'; a new creation which is for here and the hereafter, for now and then.

This week, all over the world, even in this time of pandemic, many people are celebrating the resurrection, not as a past event, not as something in the bible, not as something from the annals of history, but as a NOW event. A NOW event that shows a relationship with a Christ-like God in whom we live and move and have our being; and who lives in us. A God just as eager as ever to open our blind eyes, unstop our ears, and set us free from the prisons of our making, and, as it were, to raise us from the dead and give us new life.

So it is not surprising that in our Easter Day services, we will be starting by renewing our baptismal promises; an association of baptism and Easter that the church throughout the ages has usually made. Baptism is the way in which, by turning to Christ, we pass from death to new life, and attempt to live as part of the new creation. Above all days, Easter day speaks to us in the clearest way of that truth.

At the beginning of our communion Thanksgiving prayer we normally say

"The Lord is here" with the reply, "**His Spirit is with us.**" I read yesterday, that the version that the Easter Orthodox Church say on Easter day is "**Christ is in our midst**", with the reply, "**He is, and always will be!**" That is the reality I strive to profess, and invite you to do so; with conviction, if not with passionate intensity; and it is that Easter faith that I hope to die, and so to pass with Christ from death to life.

Prayers and Praise

Alleluya! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluya!

Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He has raised Jesus from the dead.

By his holy and glorious wounds may Christ our Lord guard us and keep us.

He has given us new life and hope.

God has claimed us as his own. He has made us light to the world.

Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us: so let us celebrate the feast,

not with the old leaven of corruption and wickedness:

but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Christ once raised from the dead dies no more:

death has no dominion over him.

In dying he died to sin once for all: in living he lives to God.

See yourselves therefore as dead to sin:

and alive to God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Christ has been raised from the dead: the first fruits of those who sleep.

For as by man came death:

by man has come also the resurrection of the dead;

for as in Adam all die: even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

God of truth, we have seen with our eyes and touched with our hands the bread of life and cup of salvation. Strengthen our faith that we may grow in love for you and for each other. Send us out with your Spirit to declare your truth with unshakable faith in the world you love, through Jesus Christ our risen Lord.

Amen

Christ has come to turn the world upside down: to humble the powerful and lift up the lowly. Christ has come to turn the tables: to topple vain idols and to stand with the poor. Christ has come to turn the world upside down: to feed the hungry, to give sight to the blind, to strengthen the weary, to set the prisoners free. Christ has come to turn the tables: to overthrow the present order with a revolution of love.

May the living God remove the suffocating shroud that lies upon our world; may the Risen Saviour draw the sting of death, bringing all to life in him; May the flowing Spirit set us and all creation free and seal our hearts with faith; and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you this day and for ever more.

Amen