

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2020 Easter Sunday

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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.

God is ever present, around us and within us, though separate let us worship together in God.

This is the day when he rose again, let us rejoice.

Hymn (sing your favourite Easter hymn)

Prayer

Loving God, on this Easter morning we bring you our praise.

Though we are apart we are together in heart, together in love, and we are surrounded by your eternal, unconditional love.

Wherever we are, we can see signs of your presence, new growth on trees, hints of colour in our pots and gardens, birds singing in hedges and on fences, the breeze rippling the leaves, April showers refreshing gardens and bright rays of sun reflecting off windows, you are everywhere.

Wherever we are, we can communicate with family and friends through the power of technology, part of the inventive creativity inspired by your Spirit.

Eternal God, this Easter may be different, strange, but we are one in you and in that it is the same as before, and the same as it will always be.

For this Easter day we praise and thank you.

The Lord's prayer

Inspired by Psalm 118 verses 1,2,14-24

God of eternity your love is endless throughout creation.

In God we find our strength.

God is the source of life

and in God all are born united.

When we realise this our hearts sing out,  
rejoicing in our oneness,  
rejoicing in love.

In God is eternity,

for God is the source of life

and though we die,

in God we live and so we need not fear.

In this reality there will be trials,

we will mourn and grieve

over friends and family

loved and lost,

but we are one and can never be separated.

So, through our tears, we remember

and in our remembering, we find hope.

In God we find our strength.

God is the source of life

and in God all are born united.

Heather Whyte 2020

Readings      Jeremiah 31:1-6  
                  John 20:1-18

Hymn            Jesus Christ is risen today, *Alleluia!*  
                  our triumphant holy day, *Alleluia!*  
                  who did once, upon the cross, *Alleluia!*  
                  suffer to redeem our loss. *Alleluia!*

Hymns of praise then let us sing  
unto Christ, our heavenly King,  
who endured the cross and grave,  
sinners to redeem and save.

But the anguish he endured  
our salvation has procured;  
now in heaven Christ is King,  
where the angels ever sing.

Sing we to our God above  
praise eternal as his love;  
praise him, all you heavenly host,  
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost .

*Lyra Davidica, 1708 (alt.)*

#### Reflection

‘May God in his mercy bring us through these times, but above all, may he lead us to himself.’  
Dietrich Bonhoeffer

In Jeremiah 31 we see the promise that no matter how bad things get there is hope, there is a future. It may be different from what we knew in the past but there is a new beginning. Israel were defeated and many had died but they still rest in God’s love. In the depths of their despair the Lord appears with a message, ‘I will build Israel again, you will rejoice again with singing and dancing, you will plant the land and harvest the fruits, you will be known as Israel wherever you are’.

The disciples were in a bad place, the people who gathered around them were in a bad place, it had all gone wrong. They had followed Jesus, seen amazing things and even though Jesus had hinted at what might be to come they had ignored the warnings, but come it had and now Jesus was gone. The golden future had faded, and all looked bleak. Now we know that this was not the end, we are the proof that this was not the end, but for those first disciples it was exile all over again. Hiding away, scared in case they also were arrested, and then the rumours start.

This is the day.

The day to which everything led,  
through Holy Week  
to the revelation of an empty tomb,  
and the promise that death is not the end.

For this is not the end but the beginning of the story.

This is when we realise a new reality and,  
with confidence step out in a new way,  
on a new way,  
the way of Jesus.

We know it will be a way of ups and downs,  
lows and highs,  
but it is the way of pilgrimage, a way to know God.

This is life in all its fullness.  
We thought we had life,  
we grasped everything we could  
only to find when we opened our hands  
we held nothing.  
Life in all its fullness is not about possessions,  
not even pearls of great price,  
it is about love,  
about caring and sharing  
and wanting the best for others.  
It is about finding, that in the giving of ourselves to others  
we have wealth beyond money,  
life beyond life,  
love beyond the love we thought was love.

This is the day,  
the day made for living and loving,  
the day created for all,  
given to all  
that all may rejoice in the oneness we are in God.  
Let us rejoice, for this is the day.

This is indeed the beginning, it was for the disciples, but there was a long lead up time to the when they would recognise the beginning. The resurrection appearances, all very different and yet with a similar thread of Jesus and yet not Jesus, slowly awakened them to the possibility but it was seven weeks until Pentecost before they would find not just a voice but confidence and a sense of connection.

For us, in the middle of something very strange, we can take hope from Easter, there will be a new beginning. Just like the Israelites and the disciples life may not return to what it was before but a new way of life is promised. There are things for us to learn from our experience, whether it is seven weeks or longer, we are seeing the re-emergence of community, a reevaluating of what is important, and we see the evidence of what our change of life is doing to the planet with cleaner air and more in tune way of life. It is hard, and we do miss family and friends and daily encounters but if this leads to a new way of life then this is truly Easter for all of us.

Poem

**Risen**

Light  
fills our lives  
risen Jesus  
on this Easter day.

We celebrate your resurrection  
with songs of joy  
and proclaim your Easter presence  
in every corner of your creation.

Let a new day begin for your world.  
Let the smallest flower  
and largest star  
announce the news

that death is overcome by life  
and all things are made new.

Let private grief  
and public tragedy  
be not ignored  
but, through your Friday pain  
be gathered up  
in your eternal victory  
as mercy and compassion win  
and peace receives the prize.

Let each of us  
no matter what our age or skill  
leave all our burdens  
at your empty tomb  
and, from this dawn  
begin a resurrection journey,  
a pilgrimage of joy  
that starts and ends in worship;  
for you are worthy to receive  
all blessing, honour, glory and power  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.

David Jenkins, taken from the 1987 Prayer Handbook

#### Prayer

O Lord of the Kingdom  
Where losing is winning  
And love has a strength which  
Gives promise of dawn;  
Teach us in our doubting  
To know resurrection  
And live in your world as  
A people reborn.

O Lord in your kingdom  
The poorest are welcome,  
The homeless find lodging  
The outcast belong;  
Fill us with your loving  
And free us Lord Jesus  
To worship and serve you  
All ages along.

Edmund Banyard, taken from the 1987 Prayer Handbook

Loving God, on this Easter day we pray for our world.

We bring to you a people struggling with the effects of coronavirus and yet a world in which we are seeing the emergence of a new community spirit. We grieve with all who have lost loved ones, whose livelihoods have been challenged to breaking, those whose circumstances make it harder to cope with isolation, harder to feed the family and harder to see a future. May they recognise your love amidst the chaos.

On this Easter day we pray for your church.

We bring to you people struggling with new ways of being church around the world. We give thanks for those who are able to serve their communities through supporting charities and foodbanks who are providing essential help for people in distress. We give thanks for those who are helping the NHS in creative ways, and we give thanks for all medical staff around the world who daily offer themselves to help others in their time of need. We pray especially for the L&D and all the staff who will work through this celebration saving lives.

On this Easter day we pray for our families and friends and for the communities in which we live. We bring to you people struggling with being apart at this festival time but pray that all will recognise that in keeping apart they are protecting themselves, their families, those who are serving the community and our NHS as it struggles to cope.

On this Easter day let us look the future, promised by Jesus and realised by the disciples. As we walk the way of Jesus let us keep our eyes on the future, trusting in the oneness of God and celebrating each tiny step we take towards a new way of being, and new life for all.

In Jesus name we pray, amen.

Hymn            He is Lord, he is Lord;  
                    he is risen from the dead, and he is Lord:  
                    every knee shall bow, every tongue confess  
                    that Jesus Christ is Lord.

                    He is love, he is love;  
                    he has shown us by his cross that he is love  
                    all his people sing with one voice of joy  
                    that Jesus Christ is love.

                    He is life, he is life;  
                    he has died to set us free and he is life;  
                    and he calls us all to live evermore  
                    for Jesus Christ is life.

                    He is King, he is King;  
                    he will draw all nations to him, he is King;  
                    and the time shall be when the world shall sing  
                    that Jesus Christ is King.

                    Author unknown

May the blessing that is the knowledge of God, source of all being, the love of God discovered through Jesus and the inspiration of the Spirit which binds us together be with us on our journey this day and every day. Amen.