

Sunday 4th April 2021

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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 third day since the darkness came.

Reflection Darkness

So much darkness.

There was the physical darkness,
the night in Gethsemane and that strange eclipse at midday
when it seemed the light had left the world forever.

The light that was born at creation,
that light that shone from his eyes,
the light of love itself,
had vanished, vanquished by the power of fear.

There was the darkness in our souls.

The light had vanished from our lives,
we felt bereft, despairing,
an overwhelming sadness surrounded us as we turned away,
our hopes and dreams in tatters.

There was nothing left but darkness.

How do you move forward when you cannot see the path?

How do you put one foot out of bed when there is nothing,
not even a shadow on the wall?

We disappeared, fear taking us backwards.

For days we stayed hidden,
paralysed by the darkness,
even though light had returned to the world
it could not lift the immense sorrow
that seemed to squeeze the life from our hearts.

But we learnt something new,
the light is more powerful than the dark.

It was only a flicker at first, a rumour even,
but a rumour that spread like the sunrise,
a glint here, a glint there and then realisation.

It took us a while but that light relit hope,
and suddenly we could see the way forward
and light and life took us to the future.

Love filled our hearts once more.

HW 2021

Reading Mark 16:1-8

As the sun rises on this Easter day we reflect on, and celebrate on the wonder of your love.

The world is in darkness
but the glow of your love brings hope,
a new dawn and a new beginning.
What we thought was the end
gives way to the realisation that life does go on,
death brings sadness and even despair
but love, love draws us beyond,
love holds us as we heal,
love invites new discoveries, new memories.
We remember and we build

for your love is about new life, new friendships, new ways,
what has been, is not erased, it is a part of the story,
a part of the journey, and from it we learn,
but the journey goes on and love lights our way. HW21

Suggested Hymn On the road that leads to love

Ent'ring in the holy city,
crowds surround them as they walk,
laying leaves before their progress
on the road that leads to love.

No one knew how things would turn out,
breaks in trust, betrayal, loss
in a week where dark descended
on the road that leads to love.

Friends and followers would gather
round a table for a meal,
suddenly the mood was shattered
on the road that leads to love.

Tune Sussex- Listen [here](#)

On a cross their friend was murdered,
threatening all their hopes and dreams,
yet despite this they continued
on the road that leads to love.

From the darkness of a cavern,
shone a light direct from God,
offering hope for all to follow
on the road that leads to love.

Here for us the path of promise,
here the way to find true self,
building bonds and showing oneness
on the road that leads to love.

Heather Whyte 2019

Prayer (based on Psalm 118)

We give thanks to God for his gracious love which surrounds us and holds.
In the company of all Christians we lift our voices in praise,

Alleluia, give thanks to God.

When we feel distressed, you bring us peace,
when the world pummels us, pushing and pulling us in all directions, you bring us peace
when we trust in your love, we feel at one with creation.

Alleluia, give thanks to God.

Trusting in your wisdom and guiding Spirit we move forward, the wisdom of the world holds us back in
our journey to wholeness, when we are tempted your wisdom frees us, when we ignore your wisdom
we sense a narrow path, a tunnel and see no escape. For your guidance and your love, we give you
thanks.

Alleluia, give thanks to God.

From the tunnel of darkness we move into the light.

This is the day when the world sees the glory of your love and experiences the fullness of your light, in
the resurrection of Jesus we are offered the promise of eternal life in your oneness.

Alleluia, give thanks to God.

We celebrate this day in all its wonder and love, we remember and we share, we give thanks for what
we know, and in faith we journey forward to the kingdom of love.

Alleluia, give thanks to God. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Suggested hymn

Now the green blade riseth

Listen [here](#)

Readings

Acts 10:34-43

John 20:1-18

Suggested Hymn

Good Christians all rejoice and sing

Tune Listen [here](#)

Reflection

In the gospel of Mark, the story of Easter ends quite abruptly. Three of the women who were part of
the fellowship circle and who stood at the cross, walk to the tomb with the intention of anointing the
body of Jesus, but at the same time wondering how they will manage to roll the stone from the
entrance. They are surprised and maybe shocked to discover the stone is not across the entrance and
we might wonder what they expected to find as they entered the tomb. The body of Jesus certainly,

but if the stone had been rolled away might they also have expected to find someone else in the tomb? Mark tells us 'they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed'. I wonder who they thought this was, but I am not surprised they were alarmed. The stranger tells them Jesus of Nazareth has been raised from the dead and then gives them a message for the disciples, and specifically for Peter. It is all too much for these grieving women, they cannot take it in and in panic they leave the tomb and, we are told, tell no one what they have experienced. The story is ended.

Later, someone adds a bit to Mark's story to reflect the resurrection appearances and the growth of the early church. In Acts, we read of Peter's witness to the life and ministry of Jesus with Peter explaining how Jesus of Nazareth was anointed by God, an interesting expression that perhaps reveals how the idea of Jesus as God is not yet an awareness or part of the church belief. We are told that Jesus did good things and healed those whose lives were distorted by their understandings and beliefs. Finally, we are told that after his death Jesus appeared to a chosen few.

Both Matthew and Luke give far more information about the resurrection appearances and later still John gives another account, again in great detail. John paints a different picture of Easter morning, describing in detail what was found inside the tomb. It is Mary Magdalene on her own who goes to visit the tomb and finds the stone rolled away, she does not look inside or enter, we are told, but runs to tell the disciples. Peter and the beloved disciple rush to the tomb, probably with all sorts of fears rushing around their head. The beloved disciple gets there first and looks inside but does not enter, he sees the wrapping lying discarded. Peter arrives and has no hesitation in entering and we learn that whilst the body wrapping lies discarded, the head wrapping had been folded neatly and placed separate from the other wrappings. As Peter stares, the beloved disciple enters and 'believes' even though up until this point we are told, the disciples have not understood the talk of resurrection.

Mary had followed them back to the tomb and waited outside. The two disciples leave the tomb and don't appear to notice Mary, perhaps they were too astounded to notice anything. They walk away leaving Mary crying, still overcome by her grief. Eventually, she looks inside the tomb and sees two figures who question her sorrow. Mary answers but turns away and leaves the tomb and the figures play no further part in the story, as she leaves, she sees a man, who she presumes is the gardener. We may assume that the figure was not dressed in white and looked normal enough to be mistaken for a gardener. A conversation takes place, a normal conversation, but then the 'gardener' says her name and in that moment she recognises Jesus. Presumably she had never seen this person before and would not have expected him to know her name, so she is perhaps shocked into understanding. It is reminiscent of the story of the road to Emmaus when a long conversation has taken place but it is the words used as bread is broken that opens the disciples eyes to the truth. Mary moves towards the figure she now recognises as Jesus, but Jesus says, 'do not hold onto me', this has always been a bit of a puzzle especially as later Jesus invited Thomas to touch his wounds. It is one of the mysteries of the resurrection, but Mary accepts his words and leaves to tell the disciples she has seen Jesus. Peter and the beloved disciple must have heard her and been astounded, they had been into the tomb and seen no one, just the empty wrappings. The resurrection stories are all different and yet all share the same nebulous feeling, Jesus is there and yet not there. People who are grieving deeply often experience the presence of a loved one, some even seeing the person sitting on the bed or in a favourite chair, and then they are gone. Unless you have experienced something like that it is difficult to imagine but that does not make it any less probable. Maybe there is a connection, and maybe in whatever state of being we exist beyond this experience there is the ability to appear when needed. It is not hard to imagine that the disciples needed to see Jesus again to move beyond their grief and into their call, and Mary was a part of the disciple fellowship. All we can say right now is that resurrection is a mystery.

Different people have different experiences of God. We are called not to judge but to accept this as part of the mystery of our unfulfilled humanity. However, we are invited to step beyond our current understanding into a new understanding. Jesus invited those around him to see things differently and the invitation has not changed. Resurrection happens but it does not mean getting our earthly life back, it means being raised into a new experience of being and we have no evidence of what that may be like, so we all wonder in different directions.

For me, Quantum theology offers a different insight into being, through exploring more fully our understanding of energy and connectedness, an insight which may straddle this experience and the next. Quantum science has shown that an atom may inhabit two different 'places' at the same time. We are made up of atoms and this knowledge opens up an exploration into being which we have not considered before. It may change our current beliefs about separation, removing 'now and then' and replacing with a fuller understanding of oneness.

The gospel writers all made attempts at understanding and the result was four different gospels, beginning with eyewitness accounts in all their varieties of recollection, they pieced together something they thought could have happened. Two thousand years later, we are still doing that but with new knowledge and experience of the world, the universe and creation. We will probably come to a different interpretation and I find that exciting. It reflects the journey we are on into the heart of God, the more we journey the more we discover, the deeper we go the more questions we find and that is how it should be when we engage with the source of all being. Easter is full of mysteries but also full of wonder and promise and so as we reflect, we celebrate the invitation to become people of God.

Hymn

Tune Lord for the years

Listen [here](#)

Wake up, wake up, for God is all around us,
light of the world and comfort for the soul;
guiding and leading, loving without question,
God of our lives you are our journey's goal.

Have faith, have faith when in your life you question,
and worry that your choices have been poor.
God's love is open, holding every human,
merciful love that opens every door.

Take heart, take heart, be open in your journey,
learning from others met along the way.
Through conversations, in the act of sharing
we become one and choose the loving way.

Be one, be one, forever in creation,
Love bound, united, living fearlessly;
worried no more, we join in glad thanksgiving
praising our God who is eternity.

Wake up, wake up our God is all around us,
living in love we walk the way of Christ.
We are God's people, we are building kingdom;
justice and freedom, in the name of Christ.

Heather Whyte August 2020

Prayers

Loving God you surround us with mystery and invite us to explore. As we celebrate this Easter we remember the pain and the hurt of Holy week, the darkness that crushed hope for those who had followed and loved Jesus, but we know that darkness is not the end and light, the light of love is always with us even when we struggle to see in the dark.

Loving God when life hurts and the puzzles seem impossible, may we wake up to your presence, your light and your love.

As we worship together, we bring to you our concerns for the world. Remembering all the ways in which humanity is struggling we pray for enlightenment. Your creation is bountiful, but our living creates need. May we be channels of your goodness, bringing your light and hope into the lives of the hungry, the homeless, the lost and the lonely. May we become supporters of life, challenging injustice and giving a voice to the oppressed.

Loving God when life hurts and the puzzles seem impossible, may we wake up to your presence, your light and your love.

As we move forward in our journey may we open to new ideas and new ways. Loving God through this pandemic we have discovered all that is really important, and we have learnt new ways of being and doing. May we take forward the values which we treasure and new ways of being, valuing relationships more, valuing life more and nurturing a deeper awareness of oneness, of our interdependence may we support one another on our journeys.

Loving God when life hurts and the puzzles seem impossible, may we wake up to your presence, your light and your love.

We pray for creation and recognising the fragility of our ecosystems may we pledge to explore new ways of caring for our planet, new ways of living which enable life without destroying the earth. As churches may we move forward to be examples of living sustainably, and our buildings be examples of living in harmony with creation. May we live counting the cost to our planet and not the cost to our pocket.

Loving God when life hurts and the puzzles seem impossible, may we wake up to your presence, your light and your love.

As we celebrate Easter, we remember all those who are missing loved ones this Easter, those who have lost loved ones during the pandemic, those who are missing loved ones because of restrictions, and those who have lost their jobs, their businesses and their homes. In love, may we reach out to our communities and offer hope and love in the midst of despair.

We pause to remember our families and friends.

We give thanks for all who have worked to save life during this pandemic, medical staff, care staff and scientists, and for those who have served us through lockdown, may we continue to value them and show our appreciation, building a new community of love.

Loving God when life hurts and the puzzles seem impossible, may we wake up to your presence, your light and your love.

In Jesus name, Amen.

Offertory

As we continue to worship apart but together, we pledge our commitment to sharing in the work of our church through our continued offering and by exploring new ways of living generously, and may we know your blessing on all we do. Amen

Suggested hymn

Listen [here](#)

Thine be the glory

Blessing

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.