



Sunday, 12 April 2020

Easter Day

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Dear Friends,

What a strange Easter Day this will be for us all. No bells, no joyful singing in churches decked out with flowers. No celebrating the Eucharist together.

For the children, no bringing out their Alleluias – put away for Lent - or racing around the churchyard hunting for eggs.

Instead, locked into our homes, isolated, on the whole, from our friends and families; perhaps feeling anxious and afraid of what the future holds. Very much, then, like the morning of the first Easter when the disciples too, were locked into a room in fear and uncertainty.

Into that situation burst the Resurrected Lord, bringing joy, hope, courage and a passion to spread the Gospel.

However gloomy our present situation – both individually and nationally, indeed, globally – may be, today we have cause to be joyful and hopeful as we celebrate the victory of Christ over death, and his opening the way of salvation to us all.

So take heart, rejoice and celebrate Easter however you can, but most especially in your heart, giving thanks to God for his power, his love and his goodness and entrusting to him all that lies ahead.

Sarah.

Christ is risen: Alleluia!

What follows is a Service of the Word for Easter Day, adapted from Times and Seasons, for personal use at home.

Gloria in Excelsis

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 Collect

Lord of all life and power,
Who through the mighty resurrection of your Son
overcame the old order of sin and death
to make all things new in him;
grant that we being dead to sin

and alive to you in Jesus Christ;
may reign with him in glory;
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit
be praise and honour, glory and might,
now and in all eternity. Amen.

Old Testament Reading: Jeremiah 31, 1 - 6

At that time, says the LORD, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. Thus says the LORD: The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness; when Israel sought for rest, the LORD appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you. Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin Israel! Again you shall take your tambourines, and go forth in the dance of the merrymakers. Again you shall plant vineyards on the mountains of Samaria; the planters shall plant, and shall enjoy the fruit. For there shall be a day when sentinels will call in the hill country of Ephraim: “Come, let us go up to Zion, to the LORD our God.”

New Testament Reading: Acts 10,34 - 43

Then Peter began to speak to them: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in

Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Gospel Reading: Matthew 28, 1 - 10

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ This is my message for you.” So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

Address for Easter Day

Sarah Cottrill

In our epistle, Peter speaks of the all-embracing love of God and nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than in the Gospel account of the resurrection. It can surely not be a lucky coincidence that the first witnesses of that event were women – at best second class citizens and as if that wasn't enough, one of these women had a very suspect past! Nonetheless, she had chosen to follow Jesus and whatever her gender, her status and her past, she was accepted and loved by Christ and chosen to be one of the first witnesses of his resurrection. It is easy for us to forget the depth of suffering that these women and all Jesus' followers had endured over the last week. They had been taken on an emotional roller-coaster - from the extreme height of joy and expectations of great things to come, to the absolute depths of despair, grief and terror. Not only were their political and religious dreams dashed but the man they had loved and followed for the past three years had been shockingly betrayed, tortured and killed and now they were in fear for their own lives. And yet, despite all of this, two women had dared to go to the tomb on Easter morning to continue their loving service to (as they thought) their now dead Lord. At the tomb, they were met by an angel whose message filled them with both fear and joy. Leaving there, the women next met Jesus Himself who repeated the angel's instruction to go and tell the other disciples what had happened and what they must do. That group of broken, needy and fearful men, each weighed down with the sense of their own failures and weaknesses, were to be told the Good News of Christ's

resurrection and would, in turn, be sent throughout the world, to take the same message to all people. Christ's command to "go to my brothers" was the fore-runner of His later command to them to "go and make disciples of all nations."

That same Christ, whose resurrection we celebrate today, still calls each of us to spread the good news. The Easter message is not one to be whispered about, fearfully, hesitantly, behind closed doors. It is one to be taken joyfully, fearlessly to people everywhere. It is a message still desperately needed by so many sad, lonely and broken people in all areas of our world today and we are the people who can, if we will, hear Jesus speak our name and respond. Beginning with our own families, neighbourhoods and communities, we are to witness, by word and deed, to the love of God and, like Peter, we are to do so recognising the impartiality of him we serve. We must witness to those who hold different views to us, to those we find difficult to like, much less love, to those we would much rather leave for somebody else. We must face our own taboos and overcome them.

Recognising and acknowledging our own weaknesses is never easy – most of us prefer to present ourselves as strong and if not quite perfect, then very close to it. We tend to be rather defensive about any faults we will admit to. "I am what I am, and what I am needs no excuses" sang Gloria Gaynor in the 1980s but Paul has a much better way of expressing it.

Acknowledging his own past and deeming himself unworthy of the call he had now received he wrote: "By the grace of God I am what I am and his grace towards me has not been in vain." God's grace is available to all of us - those who have

committed dreadful acts of terrorism or crime as much as those who daily go about performing good deeds. The only thing required from any one is that they, at some point and in some way, hear the voice of God, and respond.

Today we celebrate the most important event in the history of mankind – the single event which has had the greatest impact on the greatest number of lives but it has only had that impact because people proclaimed it and allowed its influence over their lives to be seen. We have a simple choice to make: do we keep the Easter message and our Christian faith to ourselves – something “we do on Sundays” or do we go out and live it? We can choose to hide our faith behind closed doors or we can allow it to influence every sphere of our lives – proclaiming by our words, our actions and the way in which we treat anybody whose path we cross that we are followers of Christ.

In these troubled times, more than ever, the world needs to hear – and see in action – the love of God. For many it is harder than ever to be channels of that love. We cannot go out serving others as we might like due to restrictions imposed on us. And we must respect those restrictions – they are there for our own good. However, that makes it all the more important that we support the lonely and the isolated by whatever means we can – usually a phone call or an email. It may not seem much but it could mean the world to somebody.

On this strangest of Easter Days, we can still spread the message of love, hope and tribulation beaten down. We just need to be a little more imaginative in how we do it!

Prayers

We pray to Jesus who is present with us to eternity

Jesus, light of the world,
Bring the light and peace of your gospel to the nations

Jesus, bread of life,
Give good to the hungry and nourish us all with your word

Jesus, our way, our truth, our life,
Be with us and all who follow you in the way.
Deepen our appreciation of your truth
And fill us with your life.

Jesus, Good Shepherd who gave your life for the sheep,
Recover the straggler, bind up the injured, strengthen the
sick and lead the healthy and strong to new pastures.

Jesus, the resurrection and the life,
We give you thanks for all who have lived and believed in
you.
Raise us with them to eternal life.

Jesus, Lord of life,
In your mercy, hear and accept these prayers.
Amen.

Here you may like to say the Lord's Prayer.

Conclusion

Praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us new life and hope by raising Jesus from the dead.

God has claimed us as his own and has brought us out of darkness to be light to the world.

Alleluia. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Thanks be to God. Alleluia!

Notices

For those with internet access, there are many prayer resources on the Church of England website. The clergy and ALMs would also be very pleased to pray with people by phone or online means such as SKYPE; please refer to the contact details on the back page.

The links provided below may also be useful. Thanks to Colin Nash for providing these.

https://www.stjohninbedwardine.co.uk/about/Parish_Magazine/Archive/

https://www.stjohninbedwardine.co.uk/about/Parish_Magazine/St_Clements_Parish_Magazine/

Weddings and Funerals

Weddings are being postponed.

Advice for funerals is that only immediate family should attend and that anyone in a vulnerable group should not be present. Funerals can only take place at the grave-side or crematorium, (not in church) and numbers at the crematorium are now limited to five. We recognise that this is very difficult. We will do our best to deal pastorally with each situation within the limitations of the new guidelines. As funerals have to have small numbers, memorial services can be arranged for after the lifting of the restrictions which would allow everyone to honour the person's life.

Coronavirus (Covid-19)

Remember to keep up to date with latest government advice, especially on self-isolating and social distancing. The advice is given for a reason. It is not only for your own protection, but for the protection of the most vulnerable groups in society, so please do not interact with other people if you have symptoms or believe you have been exposed to the virus. If this causes problems, such as with obtaining food, we are available to help; please refer to the contacts list on the back page.

Revd Canon Stephen Buckley	01905 428802
Revd Canon John Wright	01905 339661

The following people are available as points of contact, especially (but not exclusively) for those in isolation who might like a chat, or support with practical matters such as shopping, or need any other assistance or support at this time.

Rob Little 481107	01905 421991 or 07704
Colin Nash 408813	01905 428962 or 07799
Sandra Nash 726834	01905 428962 or 07889
Maureen Ovington	01905 427456
Catherine Templeton 297413	01905 749025 or 07708
Gordon Templeton 485949	01905 749025 or 07785
Graham Evans	01905 428667
Philip Evans	01905 426869
Joy Job 034633	01905 423051 or 07803

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