

Hailsham Methodist Church
Worship at Home
Easter Sunday, 4th April 2021

Opening Prayer:

In life, in death, in life beyond death,

Jesus Christ is Lord

Over powers and principalities, over all who determine, control, govern or finance the affairs of humankind,

Jesus Christ is Lord

Of the poor, of the broken, of the sinned against and the sinner,

Jesus Christ is Lord

Above the Church, beyond our most excellent theologies, and in the quiet corners of our hearts,

Jesus Christ is Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Hymn: Christ The Lord Is Risen Today (StF 298)

Prayers of Adoration & Confession

Lord God, early in the morning, when the world was young, you made life in all its beauty and terror, you gave birth to all that we know.

Hallowed be your name, ***Hallowed be your name.***

Early in the morning, when the world least expected it, a new-born child crying in a cradle announced that you had come among us, that you were one of us.

Hallowed be your name, ***Hallowed be your name.***

Early in the morning, surrounded by respectable liars, religious leaders, anxious statesmen and silent friends, you accepted the penalty for doing good, for being God: you shouldered and suffered the cross.

Hallowed be your name, ***Hallowed be your name.***

Early in the morning, a voice in a guarded graveyard and footsteps in the dew proved that you had risen,

that you had come back to those and for those who had forgotten, denied and destroyed you.

Hallowed be your name, ***Hallowed be your name.***

This morning, in the multi-coloured company of your Church on earth and in heaven, we celebrate your creation, your life, your death and resurrection, your interest in us; so we pray:

Lord, bring new life, where we are worn and tired;

new love, where we have turned hard-hearted;

forgiveness where we feel hurt and where we have wounded;

and the joy and freedom of your Holy Spirit, where we are prisoners of ourselves.

To all and to each, on this community and on his friends, where regret is real, Jesus pronounces his pardon and grants us the right to begin again. Thanks be to God! ***Amen.***

Gospel Reading: Mark 16:1-8

Hymn: Christ Is Alive! (StF 297)

New Testament Reading: Acts 10:34-43

Reflection:

The story of the Resurrection begins with the practical details that accompany any funeral. The women were busy with all that needed to be done. The Sabbath ends at sunset, so Mark's Gospel tells us how they went out in the evening to buy the spices they thought they needed. Then, when the light of dawn made it safe for them to move a little further, they went to the garden – but they were anxious: was the stone going to prevent them reaching the Lord's body? If you've ever had a funeral to deal with, you'll recognise the scenario. There were a hundred and one small details to arrange and little problems to overcome, in order to say goodbye to the beloved in the best way possible.

And then the women discovered that there was no-one to say goodbye to, no body to tend with their spices, but instead an unknown young man, giving them unbelievable news. The familiar patterns of life and death were broken, and Jesus had been raised. We hear this news with joy, but there is no joy in the women's response, only amazement and terror. The old, familiar rhythms of mourning and loss have gone, and what will take their place?

Scholars have argued for centuries about the ending of Mark's Gospel. Did a page drop out of the manuscript, or was it really meant to end like this? There are a variety of attempts at a different ending, though it's noticeable that several of them also present the Resurrection as unbelievable.

Why does Mark seem to leave the story hanging in this way?

Perhaps there is an explanation for this ending. The women's flight fits into a pattern in this Gospel. The disciples ran away from Gethsemane. Peter denied his Lord. Only the women were left to watch from a distance, and now this earth-shattering news destroys even their courage. So how did the good news of the Resurrection emerge from this group of broken, terrified people?

Only through the power of God! Human beings don't have the capacity in themselves to make sense of what God does, still less to communicate it. God's grace alone enables Jesus' disciples to recognise that in him, we see Jesus Christ, the Son of God. God's grace alone enables us to grasp the awesome story of the Resurrection and to share that good news – as Mark shares it with us. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

To Ponder: How might you begin to tell someone about Jesus' resurrection?

In your opinion, does the Church get the balance right between celebrating Easter and the joy of the resurrection, and recognising its earth-shattering potential to create terror and amazement? In what way?

Hymn: When Easter To The Dark World Came (StF 316)

Prayers of Intercession

On this Easter Day, we remember those who have gone before us to glory. May we, like them, inherit your eternal kingdom.

Christ is risen. ***He is risen indeed.***

We pray for all who are fearful today; people living alone; people who have endured great trials; people who are scared for each new day. Come among them and breathe your resurrection peace.

Christ is risen. He is risen indeed.

We pray for your worldwide Church, united today in joyful acclamation of the risen Christ. May we, your Church, daily witness to the life of the risen Christ in our own lives through our love of God, self and neighbour.

Christ is risen. ***He is risen indeed.***

We pray for the leaders of the world, and for the people they govern. Endue them with wisdom and justice, so that they might govern all people with equity.

Christ is risen. ***He is risen indeed.***

Finally, we pray for ourselves. In Christ we are indeed more than conquerors. May "Alleluia" be our triumphant song today and always. ***Amen.***

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray: Our Father

Hymn: I Know That My Redeemer Lives (StF 303)

Blessing:

God the Father, by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead, strengthen us to walk with him in his risen life; and may almighty God bless us, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Reflection by Rev Caroline Wickens, taken from 'A Word In Time', Methodist Church website
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