



Easter Sunday

Morning Prayer

Dispersed community prayer at 10:30am

(But God will hear our prayers anytime!)

*You are invited to guard time for us to be together, united in prayer in one faith,
to our one Lord*

You may wish to prepare by lighting a candle

◆ denotes an optional pause to keep silence and meditate on the words

🔊 Denotes optional audio / video version from the church website:

www.widcombe.church/church-online/

With thanks to our very own Jules for playing the organ for our Easter hymns

Preparation

O Lord, open our lips

and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

In your resurrection, O Christ,

let heaven and earth rejoice. Alleluia.

Give thanks and praise God

Blessed are you, Lord God of our salvation,
to you be praise and glory for ever.

As once you ransomed your people from Egypt
and led them to freedom in the promised land,
so now you have delivered us from the dominion of darkness
and brought us into the kingdom of your risen Son.

May we, the first fruits of your new creation,
rejoice in this new day you have made,
and praise you for your mighty acts.

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Blessed be God for ever.

The night has passed, and the day lies open before us;
let us pray with one heart and mind.

◆

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
so may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you;
now and for ever. Amen.

Hymn

Christ, the Lord, is risen today, Alleluia!
Let creation join to say, Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
Sing, ye heavens, and earth, reply, Alleluia!

Vain the stone, the watch, the seal, Alleluia!
Christ hath burst the gates of hell, Alleluia!
Death in vain forbids His rise, Alleluia!
Christ hath opened paradise, Alleluia!

Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia!
Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!
Once He died our souls to save, Alleluia!
Where thy victory, O grave? Alleluia!

Soar we now where Christ hath led, Alleluia!
Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!
Made like Him, like Him we rise, Alleluia!
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!

Hail, the Lord of earth and heaven, Alleluia!
Praise to Thee by both be given, Alleluia!
Thee we greet triumphant now, Alleluia!
Hail, the Resurrection day, Alleluia!

The Word of God

New Testament reading: Colossians 3:1-4

Living as those made alive in Christ

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Gospel reading: Matthew 28:1-10

Jesus has risen

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place

where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: "He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him." Now I have told you.' So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. 'Greetings,' he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.'

Reflection

Resurrection perspective

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

My Easter greetings to you all!
For those of you I don't know, I am Jenny, Curate in Widcombe, and it is a privilege to be sharing with you a few thoughts this Easter. As you watch, listen or read my words in your home, I want to begin by thanking you for your hospitality.

I realise that this Easter is like none other and it is a sadness that we cannot gather in person to celebrate the good news of Jesus' resurrection from death, and yet this unprecedented season adds a depth of poignancy to this message. Some of us will be grappling with fear, exasperation, or even grief in this season. Some are working like crazy and others are on an enforced break. Some are feeling distant from people and others smothered by no space from people. Wherever *you* are physically and emotionally, it is my prayer that as we reflect on this Easter message together, we will be encouraged in our relationship with our faithful, unchanging, good God.

This year, Matthew's account of the Gospel leads us through the news of Jesus' resurrection and I'm sure you're expecting me to focus on Jesus breaking-out of the lockdown of death....

...but! this year, the verse that seemed most prominent to me is a seemingly incidental comment:

"There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it."

"The angel... rolled back the stone and sat on it."

"He sat on it."

It is odd to sit on tombstones in any culture, but it's also a trivial detail – why bother mentioning at all? What does it matter whether the angel of the Lord stood or sat or even where he sat?

But Matthew, like the other writers, is careful in choosing words. No comment is wasted.

The angel's stance communicates something important, or rather, it confirms the truth of the message he is sharing. It is like a prophetic act. You cannot sit down to fight. We stand to fight. We stand to hold our ground under attack. But when the battle is won, we sit down in victory.

What is the battle that has been fought and what is the victory won?

The battle was against the power of sin and death, which were not part of God's original design. The sin that condemns us to be distanced from God's holy presence could never be overcome by us trying to be good or even by offering sacrifices.

Jesus, who was *also* fully human, was tempted and hurt just like we feel tempted and hurt, but unlike us, He didn't waiver from the path of perfect love and holiness. As the wages for sin is death, Jesus laid-down His sinless life, to take the hit of death for each of us.

Compelled by love for you and me, Jesus was the perfect sacrifice, once and for all of us. That was the battle.

Being fully God, as well as fully man, Jesus was raised from death – breaking its everlasting power over blemished humanity! That was the victory!

And so the tombstone, which had sealed the grave, symbolising the holding a person in death has now become obsolete! It now becomes the symbol of the enemy territory of death being overcome by life. "He is not here in the grave, for He has been raised" the angel proclaims! Death everlasting has been overcome by life everlasting in Jesus. He is the resurrection and the life.

The victory has been won by Jesus, and so the angel can sit down.

This is good news! Mighty GOOD NEWS!

This Easter, we track with these women who were the first to be entrusted with the Good News but given our current circumstances it may not *feel* like there's victory over death. It may feel like we're stuck in a perpetual Holy Saturday. It can feel as though we're locked-down in that dark dead-end tomb, feeling hopeless, perplexed, fearful perhaps.

A letter encouraging the church in Colossae, reminds us to lift our gaze out of the tomb, to set our minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. This letter reminds us that followers of Jesus can have a different perspective in this season.

For example, from the tomb perspective we may see church doors locked. From Christ's perspective we may see church walls of division falling down.

As followers we suffer alongside others in our community, we are not immune from the troubles this virus is invoking BUT we are invited to view the storm from a different perspective. How is this possible?

When Jesus Christ finished His Redemptive work, He ascended to heaven and *He sat down* at the right hand of God.

If you are a follower of Jesus, you are in Christ and if in Christ it is *impossible* to not be seated where Christ is seated right now. If you, fellow believer, are in Christ, you and I are in this position of victory because that is where Christ is.

And our battle, is to believe and trust and hold on despite the storm around us.

An Easter weekend some years ago, when I was about 18, I was travelling alone. On Good Friday I was due to take a boat from one island to another. I was going to stay in the home of someone I knew over Easter. But that Friday an almighty storm was raging and all the boat crossings were forbidden for the whole weekend. I had run out of cash and my bank card had expired, besides the banks were closed for those four days. I had nowhere to stay and only an apple to sustain me! I was young and I felt isolated, frightened and vulnerable – not to mention hungry! I cried. I begged God for help and by an extraordinary turn of

events some people cashed-in my boat ticket. I walked some way through the gale to a small airport, where amazingly I could buy a ticket out of there!

The take-off was hair-raising and the turbulence through the clouds was horrid... but as I was sat in the dinky aeroplane I remember looking out the window at those beastly clouds that had caused so much darkness and trouble – but from above, they looked stunningly beautiful. Radiant from the light of the sun. The storm was still raging beneath, but I remember peace in my soul from where I was seated.

It is only an analogy, not a direct mirror to what is happening now, but I hope it is a help.

Unlike being on an aeroplane, being seated with Christ is not physically distant, or physically above. It is in the spiritual realm that we are seated with Christ, here on earth, now.

Being seated with Christ is not a passive armchair position. Jesus hasn't conquered the power of death, ascended, cracked open a beer and is watching Netflix with his feet up! He is perpetually interceding for us, defending believers against accusations of the enemy, He is making a way and shepherding us to God our Father.

Being seated with Christ is an active life in victory. We are seated with Him to share in His ministry of intercession on earth. In this season, church family, we are called to share most passionately in His ministry of intercession, as well as to continue being His hands and His feet to those around us.

We are reminded this Easter to intercede with Jesus for the people and all creation hurting by this storm but not from a place of tomb-like hopelessness, but from a changed perspective and position in the spiritual realm.

We can be full of hope because we know that this virus and economic uncertainty can and will be overcome. If Christ Jesus can be raised from the dead, God can bring beauty from ashes.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Blessing

I look forward to our 'Reunion Sunday' - the day "we shall meet again", as our Queen promises. But for now, let me offer a familiar blessing:

May the peace of God,
Which passes all understanding,
Keep your hearts and minds
in the knowledge and love of God,
and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and with those for whom you pray, this Easter and always.
Amen.



Hymn

Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son;
endless is the victory, thou o'er death hast won;
angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave clothes where thy body lay.

*Thine be the glory, risen conquering Son,
Endless is the vict'ry, thou o'er death hast won.*

Lo! Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb;
Lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and gloom;
let the Church with gladness, hymns of triumph sing;
for her Lord now liveth, death hath lost its sting.

No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of life;
life is naught without thee; aid us in our strife;
make us more than conquerors, through thy deathless love:
bring us safe through Jordan to thy home above.

An optional Prayer of Commitment

Jesus broke the power of death, but not of our freewill. We still have a choice whether or not to join Jesus in dying to our old way of independence from God and through repenting, being raised with Him in new and everlasting life, now. Easter is a good time to reflect on this.

When we choose to say sorry, turn and follow Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, we die to our old way, are born anew: raised to new life already in Christ Jesus simply through believing. The invitation is for everyone, regardless of our past.

Here is a prayer of commitment, which you may wish to use if you would like to commit your life to Jesus for the first time:

Lord God,
Please forgive me
for all the things I have done wrong.
I turn to you and turn away from sin.

[Pause. Silently ask forgiveness... for anything you know is keeping you from God.]

Jesus, please be the centre of my life.
I welcome you personally as Lord and Saviour of my life.
I ask you, Holy Spirit,
to fill me and empower me
to live as a child of God.
I want to have your grace to truly live a new life.
Thank you for hearing my prayer through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Intercessions

Alleluia, Christ is risen! "for as in Adam all die: even so in Christ shall all be made alive".(1Corinthians 15 v 22) On this Easter Day we give heartfelt thanks to You Lord Jesus for Your life on earth, Your ministry, Your suffering on our behalf and Your glorious resurrection from the grave. Thank You Lord for the hope that we have in You, the hope of eternal life.

In these days of lockdown we pray for those who live without knowledge of Your saving grace. In this unaccustomed solitude, we pray that many will turn to You and that You will bind their fears and give them hope for the future. May we, Your people, be especially faithful in prayer at this unusual time and model Your light in our words and actions.

We pray for our leaders - for the Queen and her government and especially for Boris Johnson *(currently being treated in Intensive Care). We pray for the Christians among the team who are caring for him, that they will have an opportunity to speak of Your grace and mercy - and that You will heal him from sickness. Almighty God we ask for wisdom for our spiritual leaders as they guide us through difficult times. We pray for the Archbishop of Canterbury and for clergy throughout the country, especially for Tim, Jenny and Judith. Keep them close to You Lord and give them the right words to encourage us. We ask You to bless their homes and families and to protect them from illness.

Thank You Lord so much for all those who are working in the NHS, in whatever capacity, caring for others, at personal risk. Thank You so much for others who are working so that essential services continue- for policemen and firemen, delivery drivers, supermarket workers, farmers, refuse collectors and many others. May they feel appreciated.

Lord, we are mindful that at Easter last year, churches in Sri Lanka were bombed. We lift up

our brothers and sisters in Christ who are persecuted for their faith. May they be assured of Your saving love and blessing. Give them courage to stand firm.

Father God we lift to You the many people in the world who are suffering mentally or physically. We pray especially for those we know who need Your healing..... Going to hospital at the moment must be especially worrying, so we pray for people needing surgery or other treatment in order to stay alive We pray for refugees, especially those living in dangerous, squalid conditions. Recently fires and floods have disappeared from our news, but we pray for those rebuilding their homes and businesses after natural disasters. We lift up to You children who normally would have holiday time packed with friends and fun - and we remember especially those for whom home is not a safe place. We pray for Your Presence in our homes - that You would help us to be patient and inventive. We pray for the many people who are very anxious about their finances. For Christians in this situation, please help them to trust You.

Lord Jesus, at the time of Your death on the cross, life must have looked very bleak for Your followers - but Your resurrection brought overflowing joy, hope and rejoicing. In the current quietness we are experiencing regeneration in the skies, seas and on the earth. We pray Lord that in this pandemic crisis You will bring gold out of the ashes.

May we truly celebrate Your risen life today!
Blessed be Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Blessed be God forever.

Merciful Father please accept these prayers for the sake of Your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, Amen.

The Collect

God of life,
who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son
to the death of the cross,
and by his glorious resurrection
have delivered us from the power of our enemy:
grant us so to die daily to sin,
that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his risen life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Rejoicing in God's new creation, as our Saviour taught us, so we pray

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

To Conclude

May the risen Christ grant us the joys of eternal life.
Amen.

Let us bless the Lord. Alleluia, alleluia.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia.

He is *Risen* 