

Easter Sunday Service

Introduction

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

Opening Prayer

Creator of all,
you wash away our sins,
you give us new birth by the Spirit,
and redeem us in the blood of Christ.
As we celebrate the resurrection,
renew your gift of life within us.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the risen Lord. Amen.

Song: Thine Be The Glory

(CCLI Song # 21837)

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

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 victory 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

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

No more we doubt Thee, glorious Prince of life
Life is nought without Thee. Aid us in our strife
Make us more than conquerors through Thy deathless love
Lead us in Thy triumph to Thy home above

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

Confession

Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord,
we come to you in sorrow for our sins,
and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength,
and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us.

Lord, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes,
as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us.

Lord, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone,
and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us.

Lord, hear us and help us.

Reading

Luke 24:1-12

Easter Reflection

If you are old enough, like me, you might remember a TV show called Tales of the Unexpected. It aired back in the 1980s and was based on short stories by the author Roald Dahl. Each story had a surprise in it, an odd twist that earned the name 'tales of the unexpected'.

Perhaps you feel like you are living in a tale of the unexpected at the moment? Everything around us seems strange and peculiar, like pictures of deserted London streets, the silence of hardly any planes going overhead, or the sight of shops and restaurants closed indefinitely. This is not what anyone expected at the start of the year.

And how about us personally? What is our expectation about life and all it involves? Perhaps that has been shaken up by job insecurity, economic uncertainty and worries about health for ourselves or those we love. What about our expectations for today? Normally we might have gathered with friends or family, and that is not an option in today's climate. Maybe you had given up something for lent, with the expectation of ending that fast today. I guess many of us might have broken the fast already with everything else going on. We would usually meet together as a church family to celebrate the wonder of Easter in joyful worship. Now we meet together, but scattered in different places in our homes. It is an Easter that nobody expected.

But you know, that can be quite helpful. Because it reminds us that Easter is all about confounding our expectations. Take Luke's account of that first Easter Sunday for example. The women who followed Jesus went to visit the tomb the first moment they could, once the sabbath had ended and Sunday had arrived. They expected to see a Roman guard preventing entrance to Jesus' tomb. They expected to see an enormous stone rolled across the door of the tomb, blocking entry. They expected to find Jesus' body inside. They expected to weep. They expected to mourn.

But Easter overturns their expectations. Instead of a stone blocking their entrance, they find the stone rolled away and the tomb open. Instead of Jesus' body they find an empty tomb with no body to be found. Instead of a Roman guard they find two men in brilliant white, angels, waiting to give them the good news. Instead of sadness they find joy. Instead of tears they find gladness. Instead of mourning they encounter joy.

Easter confounds our expectations, it overthrows our ideas and it changes our outlook. Dead people do not rise from the dead. The women who went to the tomb knew that. The disciples they told knew that. We know that. But Jesus rose from the dead on Easter Sunday. The tomb was empty. The tomb is still empty. Our expectations are thrown out of the window and Easter light shines into its place.

Easter is a tale of the unexpected. It is a story of things turned upside down. It is a joyful message of a situation far from normal. It's very wonder comes from its very oddness. If we find this Easter different and unexpected then perhaps God will use it to wake us up to our unexpected faith. We are people of the unexpected. We are followers of an unusual saviour. We are friends of a strange and peculiar king.

In fact, Easter is utterly unexpected to everyone except one – Jesus himself. This was not a surprise victory or unexpected event. It was his plan all along.

When the angels announce the good news to the women, they declare “He is not here; he has risen!” And they follow that with the words, “Remember how he told you...”

Easter is utterly unexpected and utterly expected. It was the planned victory of Jesus over death that broke the normal course of death and life. What seems so surprising was no surprise at all to the one who planned it all along.

So where does that leave us on this strange Easter Sunday? I say, let's embrace the strange! We are a strange people who follow a strange and wonderful saviour. We have a strange and unexpected message, that death is not the end, that death has been defeated, that death need no longer be an enemy. That is strange news and strange to the ears of those around us. But it is good strange, it is wonderful strange, it is amazing, life-changing, transformational news that is strange and surprising.

We live in strange times. Can we live out the strangeness of our faith in the strangeness of our times? There are lots of ways we could do that, but here is just one. We live in a world of fear at the moment. Fear of catching a virus, fear of losing our jobs, fear of how long things will last and, above all, fear of death. Recent

weeks have revealed our fragility and vulnerability as human beings. When we thought we might be invincible the world has been brought to its knees and brought to a standstill.

As Easter people with a strange and surprising faith, we need not be afraid. We need to be careful and protect ourselves and others, but we need not be afraid. Because we have a saviour who has been through death and conquered death for us. Death need not hold fear for those who are in Christ. That is a strange message for a world gripped by fear. But it is a powerful and positive and vital message for today. Will we pray to be so gripped by our surprising faith instead of fear, that we proclaim that message in word and deed to a needy world? Let's pray for that now.

Affirmation of Faith

Let us declare our faith
in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Christ died for our sins
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he was buried;
he was raised to life on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures;
afterwards he appeared to his followers,
and to all the apostles:
this we have received,
and this we believe. Amen.**

Song: In Christ Alone

(CCLI Song # 3350395)

In Christ alone my hope is found
He is my light my strength my song
This Cornerstone this solid Ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm
What heights of love what depths of peace
When fears are stilled when strivings cease
My Comforter my All in All
Here in the love of Christ I stand

In Christ alone who took on flesh
Fullness of God in helpless babe
This gift of love and righteousness
Scorned by the ones He came to save
Till on that cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live

There in the ground His body lay
Light of the world by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life no fear in death
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell no scheme of man
Can ever pluck me from His hand
Till He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand

Prayers

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

Time of prayer

Let's pray for isolated and persecuted churches that they may find fresh strength in the good news of Easter.

Lord Jesus,

We thank You that no tomb could hold You, and that no stone is ever too heavy for Your power to roll away. May Your resurrection power fill Your church this Easter.

We pray for all those around the world who are celebrating Your resurrection today. Many of Your family, Lord, are celebrating in places and societies who wish them dead. Keep them safe, Lord, we pray.

May Your life be seen today in the courage, the joy and the faith of Your followers, so that those who do not know You may see that only You are the life and the light of the world.

Protect Your family, Lord, we pray. Amen

**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.**

Song: Jesus Christ Is Risen Today

(CCLI Song # 4958088)

Jesus Christ is risen today
Hallelujah
Our triumphant holy day
Hallelujah
Who did once upon the cross
Hallelujah
Suffer to redeem our loss
Hallelujah

Hymns of praise then let us sing
Hallelujah
Unto Christ our heavenly King
Hallelujah
Who endured the cross and grave
Hallelujah
Sinners to redeem and save
Hallelujah

But the pains which He endured
Hallelujah
Our salvation have procured
Hallelujah
Now in heaven above He's King
Hallelujah
Where the angels ever sing
Hallelujah

Blessing

The God of peace,
who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus,
that great shepherd of the sheep,
make you perfect in every good work to do his will;
and the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. Amen.