

East Durham Methodist Circuit:

On-line Service for Easter Sunday 4th April 2021

**Prepared by Rev Alf Waite and Ann Riding
Reader: Susan Pritchard**

Theme: Jesus is Alive

Call to worship:

Christ is Risen **He is risen indeed** **Hallelujah**

Frank Kilvert, an English country curate, wrote this in his diary: I rose early and went out in the fresh brilliant Easter morning between 6 and 7 o'clock. The sun had already risen some time before, but the grass was still white with the hoar frost.

I walked across the common in the bright sunny, quite empty, morning, listening to the rising of the lark as he went up in an ecstasy of song into the blue unclouded sky and gave his Easter morning hymn at heaven's gate. Then came the echo and answer of earth as the Easter bells rang out their joyous peals from the church towers all round. It was very sweet and lovely, the bright, silent, sunny morning, and the lark rising and singing alone in the blue sky.

And then, suddenly the morning air all alive with music of sweet bells ringing for the joy of the resurrection. **'The Lord is risen'** smiled the sun, **'The Lord is risen'** sang the lark and the church bells in their joyous pealing answered from tower to tower:

He is risen indeed.

Hymn: Christ the Lord is Risen today Charles Wesley **StF 298 / H&P 198**

1 Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!
Earth and heaven in chorus say,
Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high,
Alleluia!
Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply,
Alleluia!

2 Love's redeeming work is done,
Alleluia!
Fought the fight, the battle won,
Alleluia!
Death in vain forbids him rise, Alleluia!
Christ has opened paradise, Alleluia!

3 Lives again our glorious King,
Alleluia!
Where, O death, is now thy sting?
Alleluia!
Once he died our souls to save, Alleluia!
Where's thy victory, boasting grave?
Alleluia!

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

5 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, thou, Alleluia!

6 King of glory, soul of bliss, Alleluia!
Everlasting life is this, Alleluia!
Thee to know, thy power to prove,
Alleluia!
Thus to sing, and thus to love, Alleluia!

Prayers of thanksgiving:

Lord we lift our hearts to you.

As the dawn breaks, may we carry the unity we share into every moment knowing that we are one with the risen Christ, Lord, we lift our eyes to you.

As the sun rises, may this moment stay with us, reminding us to look for the beautiful colours of promise in your Word. Lord we lift our prayers to you.

As the dew air falls, may we breathe this morning in and know that like the Earth, you sustain us, keep us and work within us always. And so, we lift our voices to you.

We celebrate the greatest day in history, when Jesus rose from death, defeated darkness and bathed the world in stunning resurrection light.

May we ever live to praise you!

Amen

Let us say together the prayer the Lord taught us :

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done - on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory,
For ever and ever.**

Amen

Hymn: **Thine be the glory Edmund L. Budry **StF 313 / H&P 212****

1. 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

2. 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**

Thine be the glory...

3. 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

Thine be the Glory...

Reading: Mark 16: 1 - 7 Jesus has risen New International Version

¹ When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. ² Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb ³ and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

⁴ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. ⁵ As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

⁶ "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'

Reflection:

Have you ever thought of what the Empty Tomb gives us ? It not only tells us that Christ is Risen as he promised, it has given us a promise that has been kept for over 2,000 years. A promise given in Love and sacrifice.

Chloe Axford wrote: **The Promise of the Empty Tomb**

The promise of the empty tomb

Rips the rug from under your feet,
And says hold on tight
We're going for a ride,
Into the deep unknown

The promise of the empty tomb

Drives nails through darkness
And says trust me
I have a plan
And it is good

The promise of the empty tomb

Says the story doesn't end the way
You think it will.
Yes, your future is set in stone,
But I carved it and it's beautiful

The promise of the empty tomb

Rolls back the stone
Dances on death
And says 'why are you crying
Don't you know me?

The promise of the empty tomb

Says you are worth so much more
Than you think you are
You are to die for,
And I did

So remember the tomb, and it's meaning, but mainly remember its promise **Amen**

Reading: John 21:1-15 Jesus and the miraculous catch of fish New Intrntnl Version

¹Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: ² Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. ³ "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. ⁴ Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. ⁵ He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered.

⁶ He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

⁷ Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. ⁸ The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.

⁹ When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

¹⁰ Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.” ¹¹ So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Jesus Reinstates Peter

¹⁵ When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

Hymn: **He has Risen** Gerald Coates, Noel & Tricia Richards **StF 302**

**He Has Risen, He Has Risen,
He Has Risen, Jesus is Alive
Repeat**

1. When the life flowed from His body
Seemed like Jesus’ mission failed
But His sacrifice accomplished
Vict’ry over sin and hell **He Has
Risen...**

2. In the grave God did not leave Him
For His body to decay
Raised to life – the Great Awakening
Satan’s pow’r He overcame **He Has
Risen...**

3. If there were no resurrection
We ourselves could not be raised
But the son of God is living
So our hope is not in vain **He Has
Risen...**

4. When the Lord rides out of heaven
Mighty angels at His side
They will sound the final trumpet
From the grave we shall arise **He Has
Risen...**

5. He has given life immortal
We shall see Him face to face
Through eternity we’ll praise Him
Christ the champion of our faith **He
Has Risen...**

Message:

⁴ Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. ⁵ He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?”

This is the third appearance of Jesus to the disciples recorded after the resurrection morning. I know it is usual to highlight the empty tomb on this Sunday. I wonder though how many messages you have heard, or I have preached on the empty tomb. Today is the great celebration of our faith. It is a transforming truth that has changed things for the whole world, this is **THE** epoch moment in history, everything changed from that

moment. What was wrong, was made right. What we could not do for ourselves Jesus had done and defeated evil.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:14, '**And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.**' We are wasting our time, though trying to do good. However! It is true, and it has changed millions of people's lives ever since!

The disciples have had days to figure out what is going on but there seems to be also a sense of bewilderment. If you consider how difficult it is for us to understand resurrection with all the knowledge and explanations, we have at our fingertips. How much harder must this have been for them?

The idea of life after death had not been part of Jewish thought for long. It appeared as a serious thought in the period between the Old Testament and New Testament. At the time of Jesus, the Pharisees and Sadducees did not agree on it. In this down time between Easter and Pentecost the disciples go fishing, or at least the Galilean contingent do.

John takes them back to the Sea of Galilee where it had all begun for them. It was here that Jesus had called His first disciples and they had left their nets to follow Him. Luke has Jesus giving them a miraculous catch of fish. On that occasion they had worked all night and caught nothing. Commanded to put out into the deep water and let down their nets in the daylight, when the shadow of the boat would be seen by those swimming below, it was a big ask of professional fishermen to put aside what they knew from experience, it would be a waste of time and effort. Nevertheless, they did as they were told and caught a great haul of fish.

Then Jesus told them they would catch people from then on, not fish. Every action in this event would remind them of their commission and the journey they had made over the three years and had brought them back to this spot. We should not be surprised at any of this, for when we are challenged or let down or unsure, we can retreat if only in our minds to places we are familiar with, our old haunts.

Like the young man I know on the verge of going to jail who rang me up and wished he was back at the Youth Club.

There is a lesson here for us too about trust. As they slowly came to know Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah, they thought they were going to be princes in the Kingdom of God with a purpose and a meaning for their lives - and now things were just as they had been before the events of Holy Week except that Jesus could disappear and appear through locked doors. In this event he sends them out again to love and serve the world by offering the salvation (or New Life) he had won for them. They just needed to trust Him to equip them for the task.

These days there are so many initiatives to help the church grow, this course and that project, new technologies and tools. The disciples show us that trusting God and casting the net you can catch a huge haul of fish.

Another lesson we can learn is that we are invited to a whole new relationship as He meets us and calls us. Just look at who was in this fishing party. A public failure - Peter. A doubter - Thomas. A loyal and devout person - Nathaniel. A couple of impulsives - the Sons of Zebedee. A couple who are background characters they don't warrant being named. Yet Jesus invites them all to the breakfast He was cooking on the barbecue.

It reminded me of a friend of mine who related to me having lunch with the Queen in Lancaster Town Hall. John was a great guy, and an amazing Christian but he was there for neither of those reasons, he was there because he was one of her tenant farmers,

on the Duchy of Lancaster estate. At the time the Queen used to make regular visits to a neighbouring estate for weekend parties. She would pass John's farm on the way, so when he was introduced to her, she commented on how well cut his hedges were that day compared to when she was making those private visits. He also told me how at the end of the lunch she got ready to go to the next engagement by taking her powder compact and lipstick out of her handbag and tidied herself in readiness to move on.

John was welcomed at the table of the monarch and these men were welcomed at the table of the Son of God, of the lamb that was slain. Easter Sunday is confirmation of our own invitation to the eternal feast with Jesus.

Alexander Maclaren, a Baptist Theologian in his commentary summaries our passage like this, **“The Pilot of the Galilean Lake; who will guide our frail boat through the wild surf that marks the breaking of the life on the shore of eternity; and when the sun rises over the Eastern hills we shall land on the solid beach, bringing our, ‘few small fishes’ with us, which He will accept. And there we shall rest, nor need to ask who is He that serves us, for we shall know that ‘It is the Lord.’**”

For my GCSE in sociology, I did a project entitled, ‘The Social Class of the people called Methodists in the Garstang Circuit.’ My research was by a written questionnaire. Most of the replies indicated that people thought themselves either Working Class or Middle Class. One person in the 60 responses I received indicated that one person thought themselves Upper Class. I think it highly unlikely that they were but that was their honest opinion.

Even without the research I could tell you that they were a mixed group, all kinds of characters just like these disciples with Jesus on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, just like us or any group of people in church. This incident shows though that God accepts us and has work for us to do. He never gives up on us, our passage finishes with a meal and the restoring of Peter as a leader in the Church - feed my lambs, feed my sheep.

You may feel lost. You may feel confused or inadequate. You may have gone back to your old haunts. You may be still working things out. Just know that the Easter hope is that God can be trusted, God invites you to the feast. He wants to dine with you. He has things for you to do. There is always a new start on offer. If you know Jesus rejoice! If you are searching for Him, put your trust in Him. Receive all He has for you for it is good and very good.

The Lord is Risen. He is Risen indeed! Hallelujah!

Amen

Hymn: I serve a risen Saviour Alfred H. Ackley

1. I serve a risen Saviour, He's in the world today
I know that He is living, whatever men may say
I see His hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer
And just the time I need Him He's always near

**He lives (He lives), He lives (He lives), Christ Jesus lives today
He walks with me and talks with me
Along life's narrow way
He lives (He lives), He lives (He lives), Salvation to impart
You ask me how I know He lives?
He lives within my heart**

2. In all the world around me I see His loving care
And though my heart grows weary I never will despair
I know that He is leading, through all the stormy blast
The day of His appearing will come at last **He lives (He lives)**

3. Rejoice, rejoice, O Christian Lift up your voice and sing
Eternal hallelujahs to Jesus Christ, the King
The Hope of all who seek Him, the Help of all who find
None other is so loving, so good and kind. **He lives (He lives)**

Prayers of Intercession:

Risen Lord Jesus we thank you for your invitation to be involved in your purposes. We thank you for all you have done for us and all that you have for us. That you can take the little we have to give and use it for the good of others. We thank you for the life you offer to all, especially for opening our eyes to you and your way.

On this Easter Sunday fill us a fresh with your life. Let it be for us a defining moment as we travel with you into the glorious future you have for us.

May your church be faithful in sharing and being good news in these strange times. Please give to your church all the drive and resource it needs to help transformation take place, as it did in those first disciples.

And as your church we pray today for those in need:

for the sick - healing,
for those who have lost love ones - comfort,

for the dying your - guidance in the journey,

for those who work to heal in the face of such sickness - strength and hope,

for those in fear of their lives or livelihoods - strength and wisdom,

for those who suffer violence - peace and safety,

for those looking for a new life - people who can guide them

for those who keep life moving - encouragement and energy

for the leaders of the nations - the desire for justice and fairness

for local authorities - resources and their fair distributions

for those we know and love - goodness and life

for those away from you - insight into the Easter experience.

Lord hear these our prayers - and those we dare not speak - and answer them within your will for the sake of your risen Son. **Amen**

1 Low in the grave He lay, Jesus my Saviour,
waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord!

**Up from the grave he arose;
with a mighty triumph o'er his foes;
he arose a victor from the dark domain,
and he lives forever, with his saints to reign.
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!**

2 Vainly they watch His bed, Jesus my Saviour,
vainly they seal the dead, Jesus my Lord! **Up from the grave...**

3 Death cannot keep its prey, Jesus my Saviour;
he tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord! **Up from the grave...**

Blessing:

Lord, nourish us with your grace and fill us with your Spirit that we may receive the promise and know the joy of eternal life and bring you glory throughout our days on earth and in heaven above.

And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you and those you love every day.

Amen