

Worship for 2nd Sunday of Easter (complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

Welcome to worship with the south Warwickshire circuit on the 2nd Sunday of Easter. Our thanks go this week to Rev. Iain Ballard who is our preacher, Pam Weston and Nigel Saxton who give us the Bible readings. I am Rev. Jeongsook Kim, and I will be leading you in worship.

THE PREPARATION

Call to worship

We come as those with doubts.
We come as those in need of forgiveness.
We come as those slow to proclaim you as our Lord and our God.
We come as those longing to hear your words of peace.
So we pray: Lord Jesus, come to us as you came to Thomas,
and set us free to worship you without hesitation and without fear.

Hymn: StF 94 – To God be the Glory great things he has done

- 1. To God be the glory, great things he has done!**
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,
who yielded his life in atonement for sin,
and opened the life-gate that all may go in:

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son;
and give him the glory – great things he has done!

- 2. O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,**
to every receiver the promise of God!
And every offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives:

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son;
and give him the glory – great things he has done!
- 3. Great things he has taught us, great things he has done,**
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
but purer, and higher, and greater will be our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see:

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father, through Jesus the Son;
and give him the glory – great things he has done!

Frances Jane van Alstyne (Fanny Crosby) (1920 – 1915)

Prayer of approach

We come in more sombre mood today;
the excitement of Easter past, we return to normal life.
But for Jesus' followers, after that first Easter, life would never be the same again.
Their new life with the risen Lord was just

beginning.

Let us stir ourselves to remember that we are children of the resurrection, and we approach our Lord with senses alert to the new life and lessons he has to share with us today.

Amen.

Prayer of confession

We lock ourselves away within walls of our own making.

Breathe your freedom into us, Lord Jesus.

We are afraid of what people will think if we say we believe.

Breathe your freedom into us, Lord Jesus.

We doubt your promises and ignore the proof you give in our own lives.

Breathe your freedom into us, Lord Jesus.

Let your love unlock the door of our doubts, and pour upon us your blessing of belief.

Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

Lord, in the warmth of your hands washing human feet,

we are forgiven.

Lord, in your willingness to drink the cup of suffering for us,

we are forgiven.

Lord, in the wide embrace of your arms upon the cross,

we are forgiven.

Risen Lord, in your emerging from the tomb, death is defeated.

We are forgiven.

Alleluia! Amen!

A prayer of thanksgiving

In this springtime season of abundance, thank you, Lord, for your blessing of life.

We see the branches blossom,
we see the flowers bloom;
and we feel a stirring deep within ourselves,
a blossoming of hope,
a blessing of belief that all will be well.
Thank you for showering your love upon
creation. **Amen.**

Hymn: StF 296 – Christ has risen while earth slumbers

- 1. Christ has risen while earth slumbers,
Christ has risen where hope died,
as he said and as he promised,
as we doubted and denied.
Let the moon embrace the blessing;
let the sun sustain the cheer;
let the world confirm the rumour.
Christ is risen, God is here!**
- 2. Christ has risen for the people
whom he loved and died to save;
Christ has risen for the women
bringing flowers to grace his grave.
Christ has risen for disciples
huddled in an upstairs room.
He whose word inspired creation
is not silenced by the tomb.**
- 3. Christ has risen to companion
former friends who fear the night,
sensing loss and limitation
where their faith had once burned bright.
They bemoan what is no longer,
they expect no hopeful sign
till Christ ends their conversation,
breaking bread and sharing wine.**
- 4. Christ has risen and forever
lives to challenge and to change
all whose lives are messed or mangled,
all who find religion strange.
Christ is risen. Christ is present,
making us what he has been –**

**evidence of transformation
in which God is known and seen.**

John L Bell (b 1949) & Graham Maule (b 1958)

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

1st Reading Acts 4:32-35 (NRSVA)

The Believers Share Their Possessions

³²Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common.

³³With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. ³⁵They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

Epistle 1 John 1:1-2:2 (NRSVA)

The Word of Life

¹ We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— ²this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— ³we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

God Is Light

⁵This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in

darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; ⁷but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Christ Our Advocate

^{2:1}My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ²and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Gospel John 20:19-31 (NRSVA)

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

²¹Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.'

²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

Jesus and Thomas

²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.

²⁵So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen

the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

²⁶A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' ²⁸Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' ²⁹Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

The Purpose of This Book

³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Sermon

Welcome! I hope that you are enjoying our service on this, the second Sunday of Easter. You'll see from the background behind me that I'm recording this from my kitchen dining room, sat at our dining table. For us as a family, an important place; a place where we meet together, eat together and share stories together. It is around this table that we hear what has happened to each of us in the day. Or we plan what is going to happen in the day ahead. It is a place of gathering, of hearing stories and planning new ones.

Easter is the time of endings and beginnings. It is, of course, the end of Jesus's life. It is about his death on the cross and through that death all

that Jesus has done and won for us. As our reading from the letter of John reminds us, Jesus's death on the cross is the all-atoning sacrifice. It makes all of us, each and every one of us, whoever we are, wherever we are, whatever we've done, whatever we fail to do; all of the good, bad, everything - regardless of all of that; all of us are loved by God, and loved so much that Jesus gave his life to show us the depths of that infinite, all-encompassing love.

Easter is about the beginning of his resurrected ministry. A ministry of continuing to bring good news to the disciples and after the Ascension the giving of the Holy Spirit that brings good news to all, has brought news since it first fell upon the church, and a Spirit who continues to breathe life and bring good news into the church today.

It is the beginning of a new relationship with God.

Yet we only know about this because people who were present at the time, couldn't stop talking about it. Even when authorities told them to be quiet, shut up, stop going on about Jesus coming back from the dead, they just couldn't stop going on about Jesus returning from the dead. It is only because of that, that we have the stories of the resurrection, one of which we heard this this morning – John's account of Jesus appearing to the disciples but Thomas being absent. Thomas refusing to believe unless he saw, unless he put his hands, unless he experienced the presence of Christ with his own being, he was not going to believe. Sometimes we think of Thomas as being doubting. I am thankful that Thomas doubted, for all those occasions that I, and I'm sure many others in the church, and many other Ministers have doubted; for those times when our humanity says but this isn't possible and yet God says anything is possible. And so Thomas refuses

to believe until he has seen, he has heard, he has placed his hands, and then, wow! what a transformation – he goes from doubting to truly believing that Jesus is the Messiah and has been raised from the dead.

That leads this early Church community to keep on telling and retelling and telling again the story of the love of God, that looks like defeat – and yet snatches victory for all time and all people.

Yes you.

Whoever you are watching this. Whether church is normal for you, whether church is an abstract idea for you, whether church is a place you go because your friends are, whether you have ever set foot in church in your life, or never have and never plan to – this story of the resurrection of the Son of God is for you. It is for you to hear that God loves you so much that he gave his only son. It is for you to hear that makes all things right between you and God. It is for you to hear that the resurrection of Christ was to bring life, new life, to each and every one of us. It is the good news that isn't just for this life but shows us that even after death there is good news for us and for all people – for we have the promise of resurrection in Christ.

Yet with that knowledge comes an expectation. In the reading from the letter of John, we hear that this is a declaration that John seeks to declare for all to hear of the good news of Christ. In the reading from acts we hear that the apostles are giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord. They can't stop talking about it. And we're called to be the same, to keep on going on about all that God has done for us and for everyone. If we stop talking, the stones will start shouting.

And so our readings point not only to all that Christ has done, but to that which is expected of

us – to tell good news. To testify to the world around us that Jesus Christ, the human who is divine, the very son of God, - God in our form – went to a cross to die for us; that in death he defeated the powers of hell and death; of Satan and all that could be against us; once and for all; and he's raised from the dead.

That 'keeping going on' is the call to the Church today. To keep retelling the story of Christ's resurrection and of our experiences of God. And so I invite you to take a few moments and to ponder where, where have you experienced God in this week since Easter; where might you have seen God at work, or where have you seen others pointing to the good news that God is with us.

Feel free to pause this video and take as long as you need to think, 'where have I seen God?'

Not only do the disciples recognize that Jesus Christ is God, the resurrected God, but they testify to that knowledge – they tell their stories to other people. And so I invite you, maybe with your friends, maybe with family, maybe on a blog or a FaceBook post maybe on twitter – wherever and to whoever it feels comfortable to you – I invite you to share your story. Having pondered where you have seen God at work, I invite you to share that story with somebody else. It doesn't have to be perfect, it doesn't need to be church words, it can be stilted and strange and not quite do it justice. I invite you to share that story, think of who you could share with.

Maybe you pondered the question of where you have seen God, and thought, 'I'm not sure I've seen God anywhere this week it's been a rough week'; or 'it's been a difficult time'; or 'I just haven't had time – the children have been off, I've been trying to work and they've been

playing'; or 'with lockdown just being eased slowly so I've been able to get out and I've not really had time to sit' or 'I'm not sure about my relationship with God was I meant to find God'. If that is you and you don't have that story to share – listen out. Listen to the stories of others, ponder what they have heard, what they have seen, and pray that God opens your eyes and your heart to finding a new story with God. A story of new life and new birth.

It is a wonderful story, this story of Easter that the immortal God should give of God's self for us. I pray if you haven't yet found this story, that you read it; and I pray within your reading that it comes alive for you as it came alive for Thomas. If you have found this story, I pray that it is so alive for you that like the disciples and the early Church you find ways to express it in words, in actions, maybe in paintings and art, in poetry and music; however you can express it, I pray you find that way. I pray that you just can't stop talking about it, showing it, sharing it with the world around you.

The wonderful news of Easter is: He is risen!
Hallelujah!
Amen!

Hymn: StF 297 – Christ is alive. Let Christians sing

- 1. Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.
The cross stands empty to the sky.
Let streets and home with praises ring.
Love, drowned in death, shall never die.**
- 2. Christ is alive! No longer bound
to distant years in Palestine,
but saving, healing, here and now,
and touching every place and time.**
- 3. In every insult, rift and war,
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,**

**Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,
and lives, where even hope has died.**

- 4. Women and men, in age and youth,
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,
and find the way, the life, the truth,
revealed in Jesus, freed for all.**
- 5. Christ is alive and comes to bring
good news to this and every age,
till earth and sky and ocean ring
with joy, with justice, love and praise.**

Brian Wren (b 1936)

THE RESPONSE

Prayers of intercession

Resurrection God, to you we bring our prayers for those whose lives touch ours however constantly or fleetingly, for all are your children and for all of them you gave your life.

We, with the world's people, have travelled a tough and painful pandemic year, sharing burdens, pains, fears, confusion, anger and death, and through it all you have walked with us. For all those who have not felt your presence, who do not feel your presence, did not feel your guiding hand, the warmth of your breath, the calming of your words, the sureness of your step.

For them all in this moment:

Resurrection God, we pray.

For those who have struggled with journeys:
- actual journeys that have had to be made, for health and well-being, for escape and survival.
- faith journeys that have been sorely tested, with familiarity of surroundings changed, with companionship parted, new worship methods explored.
- spiritual journeys and encounters that have inspired lives or taken them way beyond their comfort zone.

- relationship journeys of loving or being loved, of not loving or not being loved, of changed roles and responsibilities.

For them all in this moment:

Resurrection God, we pray.

For those who have struggled to simply hold life together, emotionally or financially. For those who have been on furlough, laid off, made jobless, those who have had to work longer, harder, deeper.

For them all in this moment:

Resurrection God, we pray.

For those who have worked tirelessly through the year to provide us with the care we need across the health services and beyond. For scientists and doctors, nurses and auxiliary staff, porter, cooks, cleaners, admin staff.

For them all in this moment:

Resurrection God, we pray.

For all those who are grieving the loss of family or friends whether through Covid or not. The pain of loss compounded by the pain of restrictions and isolation.

For them all in this moment:

Resurrection God, we pray.

As we have read of political decisions that send Jesus to the cross, so we think of political decisions taken here, near and far away. In a global world of wealth and poverty, greed and generosity, may politicians be helped and supported, guided and strengthened to think not just of their own needs but the many needs of the wider world.

For them all in this moment:

Resurrection God, we pray.

For countries torn apart by war and violence, insurrection, exploitation, natural disaster and deliberate destruction, for all their people caught up in events and conclusions way beyond their

control. We think especially at this time of Myanmar and Mozambique and all their peoples. For them all in this moment:

Resurrection God, we pray.

Gracious God, we ask these prayers through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord and Saviour.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

We now join together in saying the Lord's prayer.

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.

The Offering & prayer

Help us to be generous givers, dear Lord, both of our money and our lives, that we might make a difference in our community and beyond. We ask this through your son, our Saviour Jesus Christ who gave all that he was that we might know life in all its fullness.

Amen.

THE DISMISSAL

Hymn: StF 664 – Lord you call us to your service

1. Lord, you call us to your service,

each in our own way.

Some to caring, loving, healing;

some to preach, or pray;

some to work with quiet learning,

truth discerning,
day by day.

2. Life for us is always changing
in the work we share.
Christian loves adds new dimensions
to the way we care.
For we know that you could lead us,
as you need us,
anywhere.
3. Seeing life from your perspective
makes your challenge plain,
as your heart is grieving over
those who live in pain.
Teach us how, by our compassion,
you may fashion
hope again.
4. Lord, we set our human limits
on the work we do.
Send us your directing Spirit,
pour your power through,
that we may be free in living
and in giving
all for you.

Marjorie Dobson (b 1940)

Prayer & 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 you,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Alleluia!

Go in joy and peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Alleluia!

Copyright Notices

Hymn Words:

One Licence

The following hymns / songs are reprinted with permission under ONE LICENSE, License # **A-736737**. All rights reserved.

StF 296 – Christ has risen while earth slumbers

John L Bell (b 1949) & Graham Maule (b 1958)

Words & Music © 1988 WGRG, Iona Community, Glasgow G2 3DH

StF 297 – Christ is alive. Let Christians sing

Brian Wren (b 1936)

Words © 1969, 1995, Stainer & Bell Ltd, 23 Gruneisen Road, London N3 1DZ

Public Domain

The following hymns are all in the Public Domain.

StF 94 – To God be the Glory great things he has done

Frances Jane van Alstyne (Fanny Crosby) (1920 – 1915)

Used with Permission

The following hymns have been used with the kind permission of the copyright holder.

StF 664 – Lord you call us to your service

Marjorie Dobson (b 1940)

Words © 1999 The Leaders of Worship and Preachers Trust

Bible Verses

NRSV & NRSVA

Scripture quotations marked NRSVA are from New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicized Edition, copyright © 1989, 1995 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

*If you would like to take part, then please get in touch with the Circuit Office on
swc.katetennyson@gmail.com*