

Sunday 31 March 2024

Easter Sunday



Sermon © The Revd Dr Paul Monk.

Liturgy and prayers of intercession © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

The hymns are YouTube links. To hear the hymns please click on the links.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,
<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

All He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

HYMN 1 Jesus Christ is risen today

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

The Preparation

**All Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed for us.

Let us therefore rejoice by putting away all malice and evil
and confess our sins in penitence and faith,
firmly resolved to keep God’s commandments
and to live in love and peace with all.

All Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Gloria

All Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

The Collect for Easter Day

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.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Peter said: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all.

'That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; 40but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose

from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead.

‘All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.’ *Acts 10:34–43*

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians

Now I should remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you— unless you have come to believe in vain.

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to someone untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

1 Corinthians 15:1–11

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 The day of resurrection

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

or **Now the Green blade rises**

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

or **Low in the grave he lay**

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

All **Glory to you O Lord.**

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

She ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

The disciples returned to their homes, but Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Thinking him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned, saying to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God".' Mary Magdalene ran to the disciples and said, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

John 20:1-18

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All **Praise to you O Christ.**

Sermon

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

At first, the idea of resurrection looks preposterous. The Romans know exactly what they're doing and torture a man. To make sure he's dead, while he is still dying, a Roman soldier sticks a lance into his side: this man is trained, an expert in ways of killing, so he knows. He knows Jesus is dying then makes sure that Jesus really is dead. And he is ... and, just to make sure that no one can even steal what is left of his mangled body, his grisly remains are laid in a nearby tomb, guarded by soldiers, a huge stone is wheeled in front of the tomb, and it's sealed in place. He's dead, dead, dead and obliterated from history.

And yet, within a few short days, his friends are dancing with joy in the streets, preaching that have seen him, and are looking for converts to a new faith based on a once-dead Messiah. Within a generation, it's clear that he's not so much been *obliterated* from history as has *changed* history. History becomes 'his story'. His disciples have written the best-selling book of all time. And, to cap it all, they were saying that this dead man was not just alive but is living in these disciples.

There is only one word to describe what's happened: it's a miracle, pure and simple. And as soon as we invoke the 'M' word, we are saying that it's of God—it's a divine happening. God wants this Jesus alive and to that end is willing to bring him back from the dead—resurrection. Indeed, God is so determined for this Jesus to come back to life that he now lives not just in Heaven but also in common people like Peter and James and John: people like you and like me.

Resurrection looks preposterous from one of the human end of the telescope. But through the other end, the end that sees God, resurrection is the Christian default because Christians are resurrection people.

I said something controversial a moment ago—more odd than resurrection, of Jesus being risen. I said that God wants Jesus to live in people like you and me, and He does so because we are to live the resurrection. God did not merely 'engineer' the resurrection because He wanted Jesus to live again. God did not bring him back from the dead because it was a nice, loving, thing to do; again, while closer to the truth, it's still silly. God performed the mighty resurrection of Jesus to make the world not just a better place but a place that need never be so bad again. Jesus' resurrection was the first instalment, and we are the next.

You're expecting me to say Jesus was resurrected to take away our sins ... and it's entirely true that He did. Jesus took our sins and anyone who says otherwise is placing themselves outside true Christianity. No: Jesus *did* die, he *was* buried, he *did* rise again, and he did so to remove the barrier between earth and Heaven. That resurrection was, and is, God's way of bringing us into a relationship with Himself.

All of us can know God just like an earthly parent knows and loves their child. And He does so out of love.

God is love—the idea permeates all true scripture. At the heart of love is the idea of communion, of sharing, of sharing lives. Jesus was raised to back to life to bring about that sharing so that we can genuinely know God and know Him to the uttermost; we can love God and love Him to the uttermost. That's what Christianity is *for*.

And to make sure all of us are truly excited at this point, God constructs things in a God-shaped way: in God's plan, the best way for us to know God is for Him to live in us, with His Spirit living in our souls—an intimate indwelling, an expression of the profoundest love, ravishing, authentic, and available to all.

The point of love is not love for its own sake. No, it gives value and meaning; it regenerates: it is possible to love a soul out of death into new life. Loving a neighbour can bring about their resurrection because the love of God is always pure miracle.

At this point, someone will say, 'That's OK for you, but *I've* never felt God in that way; I don't know this love.' If anyone is saying that, tell them to look at the scripture written by St John, the apostle who describes God as love. In his Gospel he says these words, 'God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.' It says 'Whoever' with neither embellishment nor qualification, so this gift is for everyone who wants it; all you need to do is ask. That eternal life is from God, and is in God, and is from God, and is about God, and it *is* God.

We love because God first loved us; He loves us so we can love others; those others love yet others. The world changes because each of us has started to live that eternal life. It fulfils Jesus' prayer, 'God's Kingdom come ...' Resurrection again!

So, as I draw to a close, I want to say one thing more: if you have never felt God in your life, your heart, your soul—if you've never *experienced* His resurrection then make a commitment now. Ask Him in: tell Him you want Him; give Him an explicit invitation. You may feel Him straightaway; you may need to wait until God in His loving wisdom knows the time is right. Whatever. But the soul that invites God to live in it will undergo a transformation as profound as turning a grisly butcher's job into the risen Christ—we see the M word again. It's resurrection.

It's 2000 years since Jesus rose from the dead. There has not been one single day since in which God has not miraculously changed a human life and that life has been resurrected. Jesus was the first instalment of that resurrection, a foretaste; He now offers it to every single follower, to me and to you. Resurrection!

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Let us pray:

Loving Heavenly Father, Lord of life:

we freely give our lives to you

and commit to the name of Christ.

Fill us with the same Spirit that raised your Son from death to Easter life,
that we may experience true resurrection to spiritual life.

Amen.

The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
the source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

All This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

Amen.

Prayers of intercession

In joy and hope let us pray to the Father.

That our risen Saviour may fill us with the joy of his glorious and life-giving resurrection ...
we pray to the Father.

All Hear our prayer.

That isolated and persecuted churches
may find fresh strength in the good news of Easter ...
we pray to the Father.

All Hear our prayer.

That God may grant us humility
to be subject to one another in Christian love ...
we pray to the Father.

All Hear our prayer.

That he may provide for those who lack food, work or shelter ...
we pray to the Father.

All Hear our prayer.

That by his power, war and famine may cease through all the world ...
we pray to the Father.

All Hear our prayer.

That he may reveal the light of his presence to the sick,
the weak and the dying,
to comfort and strengthen them ...
we pray to the Father.

All Hear our prayer.

That, according to his promises,
all who have died in the faith of the resurrection
may be raised on the last day ...

we pray to the Father.

All Hear our prayer.

That he may send the fire of the Holy Spirit upon his people,
so that we may bear faithful witness to his resurrection,
we pray to the Father.

All Hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father,
you have delivered us from the power of darkness
and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:
grant that, as his death has recalled us to life,
so his continual presence in us may raise us to eternal joy;
through Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

The peace

The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and said,
'Peace be with you.' Then were they glad when they saw the Lord.
Alleluia!

The peace of the Lord be always with you:

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 Jesus is Lord!

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below.

The Dismissal

God the Father,
by whose love Christ was raised from the dead,
open to you who believe the gates of everlasting life.

All Amen.

God the Son,
who in bursting the grave has won a glorious victory,
give you joy as you share the Easter faith.

All Amen.

God the Holy Spirit,
whom the risen Lord breathed into his disciples,
empower you and fill you with Christ's peace.

All Amen.

And the blessing of God the Almighty:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be with you now and remain with you always.

All Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ. Amen.

HYMN 4 Thine be the glory!

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

All He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
almighty and eternal Father,
and in these days of Easter
to celebrate with joyful hearts
the memory of your wonderful works.
For by the mystery of his passion
Jesus Christ, your risen Son,
has conquered the powers of death and hell
and restored in men and women the image of your glory.
He has placed them once more in paradise
and opened to them the gate of life eternal.
And so, in the joy of this Passover,
earth and heaven resound with gladness,
while angels and archangels and the powers of all creation
sing for ever the hymn of your glory.

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.

He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with St Barnabas and all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All 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.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us.
Amen.

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

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.

All Amen

All Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out
in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.