

twelvebaskets



EASTER SUNDAY B

A complete Sunday service ready to use
for worship and inspire ideas in your church

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Easter Sunday - Year B
31st March 2024



Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

13 STF – Sing of a God in majestic divinity OR

60 STF – My soul rejoices in God my Saviour

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

62 STF – Our God is an awesome God OR

313 STF – Thine be the glory

Readings: Acts 10:34-43 or Isaiah 25:6-9; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11;
John 20:1-18

Hymn:

305 STF – Low in the grave he lay OR

309 STF – See, what a morning, gloriously bright

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

416 STF – There's a wideness in God's mercy OR

296 STF – Christ has risen while earth slumbers

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

345 STF – And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood? OR

152 STF – This is the day, this is the day

Blessing

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Call to worship

Christ is risen – he is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

The Lord's day is here, the day when we remember that light is stronger than dark, hope is stronger than despair, love is stronger than hate.

Resurrection is all around you this day, let us say 'amen' together:

Amen.¹

Hymn:

13 STF – Sing of a God in majestic divinity OR

60 STF – My soul rejoices in God my Saviour

Opening Prayers

The day of resurrection is here – and we are here to greet it.

We come, to gather in your presence, O God of Easter.

As we come to worship you, come amongst us by your grace.

This day, we gather to sing your praises and to give our thanks for all that you have done for us.

Praise you, Easter God.

Thank you for this new day, for this spring season, for the sunshine on our backs and the rain for our gardens,

Thank you for the community we are a part of, here at church, in our neighbourhood and connected across the world,

Thank you for the gift of Easter – the reminder that you have overcome the most difficult, most challenging of situations, and that you are right here with us in the midst of our own challenges.

Thank you, Easter God.

As we come in worship, Lord, we also recognise that we have fallen short of your glory.

That we have done things we wish we had not done, and not taken opportunities we wish we had taken to share something of your gospel with the world around us.

Forgive us, we pray, Easter God.

And, even as we ask for your forgiveness, we know that you have already accepted us just as we are – that you love us and invite us to be a part of your Easter people here on earth.

We praise and thank you, Easter God.

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

Reading: John 20:1-18

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

All Age Talk

Materials needed: paper, colour pens

Happy Easter! I hope those of you who have abstained from some of the pleasures in life that you like very much, will have a chance (if you want to) to enjoy some of those delights today as we celebrate Jesus' victory over death. Chocolate and sweet treats can be a great accompaniment to the joy we feel.

The passage from John that we have just heard has so much for us to think about. You can imagine how Mary must have been feeling as she made her way to the tomb. Her heart heavy, weighed down with grief and preparing herself to tend to Jesus's body. You can imagine the shock she would've felt, seeing the stone to the tomb rolled away and her heart would've raced as she ran back to tell the other disciples. And what of the disciples? Simon Peter sets off running to the tomb and is overtaken by 'the disciple Jesus loved', which is John, so that would be a humble brag that he slips into the gospel. John outruns Peter but they both reach the tomb. How fast must their hearts have been beating?

[If the following game is not suitable in your context, you can swap running on the spot with a different physical activity].

Do we have any runners here?

[Ask for a couple of volunteers who would be willing to run on the spot as fast as they can for 30secs and then calculate their heart rate by counting for 15 seconds and then multiply by 4 to get bpm.]

So, Mary and the disciples would have been facing elevated heart rates as well as shock that Jesus' body wasn't in the tomb. The two disciples see the tomb and make their way back leaving Mary there. Perhaps her breathing would still have been a little shallow and fast, her heart slowly returning to normal as she weeps. Then she encounters these two angels who begin to question her. So, it is quite understandable that Mary doesn't recognise Jesus. But how does she know it is him? He says her name.

Who loves their name? Who fancies a different name? Who knows they are in trouble when their whole name is used? Here, in this passage, Mary isn't in trouble, she's being called by her name to show that it is Jesus in front of her. There's a verse in Isaiah, chapter 43 verse 1 that says: But now, this is what the LORD says— he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine." Jesus, risen from the dead, calls Mary by name to help her see and know that he is there. Jesus calls us by name to help us know that we are his. Each one of us can struggle to see Jesus in our lives. We can be distracted, rushed, worried, grieving, busy and miss seeing that he is with us.

On a piece of paper, I would like you to write your name. Nice and big. Make it as bold as you can. And then come and bring them up to the front. *[Arrange the names in as close to a cross shape as is possible with the number you have].*

The love that led Jesus to the cross wasn't trapped inside the pages of a book and limited to the people we read about today. The love that brought him back to life, raised him from the dead was for each one of us *[read the names on the cross]*. Jesus wants us to recognise him, to be comforted by his resurrection; to be hopeful. Even when we think he is gone, he calls us by name to remind us of his presence in our lives. You are called by your name.

Today, we can celebrate with Mary and the disciples that a situation that looked hopeless is now hopeful. That where there was death, there is now life.

Be assured [*name members of your congregation*] that you are called by the risen Jesus to live a life with him.

Amen.³

Hymn:

62 STF – Our God is an awesome God OR

313 STF – Thine be the glory

Readings: Acts 10:34-43 or Isaiah 25:6-9; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Hymn:

305 STF – Low in the grave he lay OR

309 STF – See, what a morning, gloriously bright

Reflections on the readings

‘The truth is, I don’t want to die an ordinary man.’ - from the song Ordinary Man by Ozzy Osbourne

Today, we hear the reflections of minister Revd Graeme Dutton, who begins by telling how, on Easter Day last year, after the service, he was talking to a member of the congregation who said, “It’s so good to have a ‘normal’ Easter.”

Now, of course, I knew what they meant. They were talking about an Easter Day which was free of restrictions. A day when we could gather together in our churches, see each other’s faces, sing together, laugh together, shake hands and embrace. It still didn’t sound right though!

A ‘normal’ Easter.

There is absolutely nothing normal about Easter. It should always be the most extraordinary of all days. Even though we’ve heard the story a hundred times and welcomed the risen Christ with song, in our hearts if not our mouths, we can never allow familiarity to be confused with normality. Even when we have endured a number of Easter days over the past few years that have meant a change of tradition and a different way of sharing that message.

This morning’s passage from John’s Gospel does a brilliant job of making this point for us. Jesus has repeatedly and passionately told his followers that his death will not be an ordinary death. Yet, when the unthinkable has happened and Jesus has been crucified, his followers take solace in the traditions of mourning.

We meet Mary Magdalene, early in the morning as she makes her journey to the tomb in which Jesus has been placed. We hear of her shock and upset as she discovers the tomb empty and her desperate flight to Peter and another of the disciples. Explaining to them what has happened, we can hear her confusion as the ordinary is disturbed and grief compounded. When the disciples arrive at the tomb they see for themselves, and finding the usual grave clothes that wrapped Jesus’ body are empty. Even then, even with all they

³ All Age Talk written by Sheila Matthews

have been told and all that they can see, they still can't yet fathom the extraordinary thing has taken place.

After this, when Mary comes face to face with the risen Jesus, she still struggles at first to break through the conditioning of her mind. When Jesus speaks to her she first thinks he is simply the gardener. It's only when Jesus uses her name that the illusion is shattered and she begins to understand exactly how wonderful her situation has now become.

Once realisation dawns, Mary rushes to tell the other disciples the story of the risen Lord beginning a wave of hope and expectancy that reaches forward to us as Christ's church today.

So how then, are we to respond to the extraordinary events of Easter? What is God calling us to do?

I have always loved the books in Terry Pratchett's Discworld series, often reading the same book over and over again. Pratchett always had a wonderful way of writing characters that; even though they inhabited a universe where a flat world is carried through space on the back of four elephants, who in turn stand upon the shell of a giant sea turtle; did a wonderful job of reflecting real life in seriously challenging ways.

In the novel 'Carpe Jugulum' we are introduced to a missionary priest from the Omnian faith, The Quite Reverend Mightily-Praiseworthy-Are-Ye-Who-Exalteth-Om Oats, or Father Oats for short!

During the book he encounters quite a challenge as he ends up stuck in the middle of a war over a piece of land, a war fought against vampires. On his side, in allegiance against the vampires, he has three witches. One of these Magrat, is somewhat younger than the two older women who make up the Coven, Nanny Ogg and Granny Weatherwax. Granny is, by far the most formidable of the three. During the story there are several times where Rev Oats is left in some doubt as to who is scarier, the blood sucking vampires or the indomitable Granny Weatherwax. Having lived in Yorkshire for a long time and worked amongst a number of churches in the county, I can understand his predicament!

It's Granny Weatherwax who, I believe, gives us a wonderful insight into faith and how we might respond to the extraordinary message of Christ's rising from the dead.

In the following passage she is talking to Mightily Oats about the Omnian faith but as Pratchett has always been a master satirist we can see it's parallels as followers of Christ.

'Now if I'd seen him, really there, really alive, it'd be in me like a fever. If I thought there was some god who really did care two hoots about people, who watched 'em like a father and cared for 'em like a mother . . . well, you wouldn't catch me saying things like 'there are two sides to every question' and 'we must respect other people's beliefs.' You wouldn't find me being gen'rally nice in the hope that it'd all turn out right in the end, not if that flame was burning in me like an unforgivin' sword. And I did say burnin', Mister Oats, 'cos that's what it'd be. You say that you people don't burn folk and sacrifice people anymore, but that's what true faith would mean, y'see. Sacrificin' your own life, one day at a time, to the flame, declarin' the truth of it, workin' for it, breathin' the soul of it . . . That's religion. Anything else is . . . is just bein' nice. And just a way of keepin' in touch with the neighbours.'

I do believe, that the extraordinary events of Easter do call us into an extraordinary response. A response where we are willing to sacrifice our lives to God each and every day. To see the power of God in everything around us, to be enthralled by his creation and to seek, always to build his kingdom. With that as our focus, even the things that we fear may be ordinary are transformed into the remarkable.

Easter is never 'ordinary'.

If you follow Christ, neither are you!

[Questions for discussion or reflection – perhaps best in small groups of 3 or 4, with time to feed back together after each one.]

1. Where do you see the extraordinary power of Christ's resurrection in your life and the life of others around you?
2. What 'ordinary' things that you do could become extraordinary, if you consciously gave them over to God?⁴

Hymn:

416 STF – There's a wideness in God's mercy OR

296 STF – Christ has risen while earth slumbers

Prayers of intercession

On this mountain Lord
You have promised a feast for all people.

We pray that you would empower us to do our part in sharing the resources you have gifted to us.

We pray for all in our communities who are hungry, homeless, lonely or sick.

May we do all we can to help those in need.

On this mountain Lord
You have promised freedom for all people.

We pray for all areas of our world where conflict and terror are born out of greed and the desire to control.

We pray for all who are trapped in cycles of violence.

May we continue to strive for justice and peace.

On this mountain Lord
You have promised to wipe away our tears and remove our disgrace.

We pray forgiveness for all the times our decisions have harmed our relationships, damaged our planet or hurt you.

We pray for ourselves, offering all we are to you.

May we be reminded of your redeeming power.

This day and every day, may we say...

“Surely this is our God;
we trusted in him, and he saved us.
This is the Lord, we trusted in him;
let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”

Amen.⁵

⁴ Reflection written by Graeme Dutton

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by Graeme Dutton

We will now take up the offering.

Today, of all days, we are thankful. And as we come to you in thanks, Lord God, we come also to offer you ourselves again. Take these gifts, that they may become tokens of and tools for your Kingdom here on Earth – a Kingdom of new life, of new possibility, where the worst thing is never the last thing.

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

345 STF – And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood? OR

152 STF – This is the day, this is the day

Blessing

This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!

This is the day where we celebrate the victory of life over death. This is the day of possibility, of justice and joy, of hope and peace.

Come, Lord Jesus, and may we know something of your resurrection in our hearts, in our lives, in our communities and in our world.

In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen.⁷

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker