

# twelvebaskets



## EASTER SUNDAY A

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

Produced by **twelvebaskets**. Subscription available from **theworshipcloud.com**

**Easter Sunday - Year A**  
9th April 2023



## **Order of Service**

Call to worship

**Hymn:**

**148 STF – Come, let us with our Lord arise OR**

**309 STF – See, what a morning, gloriously bright**

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

Reading: Colossians 3:1-4

All Age Talk

**Hymn:**

**367 STF – When I was lost, you came and rescued me OR**

**548 STF – Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine**

Readings: Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24; Matthew 28:1-10

**Hymn:**

**300 STF – Hail the day that sees him rise, Alleluia! OR**

**407 STF – Hear the call of the kingdom**

Reflections on the readings

**Hymn:**

**594 STF – Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us OR**

**306 STF – Now the green blade rises from the buried grain**

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

**Hymn:**

**313 STF – Thine be the glory OR**

**305 STF – Low in the grave he lay**

Blessing

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**Many more resources and inspiration for this week's lectionary, leading worship and other church use are available on [www.theworshipcloud.com](http://www.theworshipcloud.com).**

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## Call to worship

He is risen! He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

Here we are, worshipping a risen Saviour,  
A God too big for death, for endings, for defeat.

Here we are, come amongst us as we celebrate:  
The worst thing is never the last thing,  
Resurrection is real, and happening again for us this day.

Happy Easter!

Amen.<sup>1</sup>

## Hymn:

148 STF – Come, let us with our Lord arise OR

309 STF – See, what a morning, gloriously bright

## Opening Prayers

Christ is alive, new life emerges, and we turn to God in prayer.

Let us pray.

Easter God, thank you for the new life of this Easter day,  
This day of resurrection and new beginnings, and hope emerging from despair.

God of each moment, we give you thanks for this one, this moment we are in right now, this moment of new life and possibility and connection with you – the ‘something bigger’ at the heart of our whole lives.

We take a moment, on this Easter Sunday, to whisper our prayers of thank you. Why not share with someone sitting near you, something you are grateful right now, and hear their prayer of gratitude in return.

*[Give people time to swap stories of thankfulness].*

Easter God, thank you that you hear our prayers – we are truly thankful.

God of our whole lives, we come to you in prayer knowing we have not always lived up to your call on our time, our choices, our desires. In this moment, we pause for a second to say ‘sorry’, to unburden ourselves of the guilt and shame and pain that hold us in their grip. In the stillness, let us say our prayers of sorry to God.

*[Pause, allowing a few moments of prayerful silence].*

Resurrection God, we thank you for your love for us, and that you love us despite all our failings, accepting us just as we are, forgiving us, and inviting us to be a better version of ourselves.

May we know something of your grace as we face the week ahead,  
May we practice something of your love as we worship you this day,

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<sup>1</sup> Call to worship written by Tim Baker

And may we be guardians of the story of resurrection, sharing the life and possibility of this Easter message with the world around us.

In Jesus' name we pray,

Amen.<sup>2</sup>

## **We say together the Lord's Prayer**

**Reading:** Colossians 3:1-4

### **All Age Talk**

Do you ever find yourself walking around with your head down...?

Perhaps you're trying not to tread on the cracks in the pavement, or looking for money someone may have dropped, or checking your phone for directions or messages...?

Quite a lot of us do seem to spend quite a lot of time looking down, and of course sometimes we need to, to make sure we don't trip over the cat!

However, if you visit any city or town, it's important to remember to look up – in Glasgow there are lots of amazing buildings with intricate stonework or towers or little balconies or mottoes built into them, but most of these are high up, above some very ordinary looking shops and offices [*preferably use a local illustration of this idea here*]. Next time you're in town, look up!!

Part of the message of Easter Sunday is also about looking up, not so much with our eyes, but with our minds, with our spirits. For the women on that first Easter Sunday it was about noticing what was happening and seeing that the tomb where Jesus had been buried was now empty. For us it might be about not allowing all the things which are wrong in the world to make us forget that there is still goodness, there is still love, there is still God.

St Paul, in a letter to the church in Colossae a couple of thousand years ago, tells the Christians there to "seek the things that are above, where Christ is". Not that we believe heaven is literally above us with God and Jesus sitting on clouds – but in our hearts and minds we remember to "Look up" and see that the cross is now empty, that Jesus is alive, that love wins.

Amen.<sup>3</sup>

### **Hymn:**

367 STF – When I was lost, you came and rescued me OR

548 STF – Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine

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<sup>2</sup> Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

<sup>3</sup> All Age Talk written by Jill Baker

**Readings:** Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24; Matthew 28:1-10

**Hymn:**

300 STF – Hail the day that sees him rise, Alleluia! OR

407 STF – Hear the call of the kingdom

**Reflections on the readings**

Christ is Risen! Happy Easter! Here we are on one of the most exciting days of the whole year, perhaps the most exciting of all, Easter Sunday, when, with forty days in the wilderness of Lent now passed, and the drama and horror of Holy Week behind us we can celebrate that Jesus is alive – Hallelujah! Thank God!

So perhaps we see this day as a day of clarification when everything falls into place and we can breathe a great sigh of relief? Perhaps, or perhaps not... Maybe today is, in fact, a day of confusion when there are more questions than answers? Is Easter Sunday a happy ending, or a terrifying beginning?

Just look again at the reading from the gospel; Matthew's final chapter begins with two Marys going to the tomb – other gospels have one, three, four or more women – this alone suggests something of the confusion and turmoil of that morning. Then Matthew describes a 'great earthquake' – a terrifying phenomenon in any circumstances; our hearts have gone out this year to those whose lives have been devastated by earthquakes in Syria, Turkey and other places. This earthquake, however, is linked to the appearance of an angel descending from heaven and rolling back the stone which covered the entrance to the tomb. This angel was not the knitted or tinsel variety with which we adorn our Christmas trees, nor the demure porcelain figure we may have on the window sill – this angel looks like lightning and is wearing clothes as white as snow. Indeed, so awesome is the angel's appearance that the guards shake and become 'like dead men'. These guards were appointed by Pilate at the end of the previous chapter when the High Priest and the Pharisees express fears that the disciples might try to pull off some kind of resurrection stunt, so we assume they were hardened, robust, armed men, not feeble-minded folk who pass out at nothing at all!

So far, as we see, the account of that first Easter Sunday morning is chaotic, dramatic and terrifying. Then the angel speaks some familiar words, familiar at least to anyone who has been visited by an angel, 'Do not be afraid'... although it has to be said that these redoubtable Marys have not keeled over like the guards on seeing the heavenly visitor. The angel has instructions for the women to which we need to pay close attention, these too are not straightforward. The angel knows why they are there, looking for Jesus who was crucified, but points out that they're not going to find him here, 'He is not here; for he has been raised'. Nevertheless, the women are to approach and 'Come, see the place where he lay'. It's as if they need to assure themselves that Jesus is no longer where they left him when (in chapter 27, v 61) they watched Joseph of Arimathea bury the body. Having come to look at this emptiness, they are sent out again, 'Then quickly go...' with instructions for the disciples, passing on the news that Jesus has been raised and is already on his way to Galilee – if they want to see him they need to travel there, a journey of about 150km! And you know what it's like trying to get a bus on Easter Sunday!

No great surprise, then that Matthew tells us the women left the tomb 'quickly with fear' but it is to their eternal credit that they were also filled with great joy. Overriding all this chaos and disruption was the indisputable sense that something wonderful had happened, Jesus was no longer dead. They set off at a run to share this good news with the disciples. How far they went we can't tell, but suddenly here is Jesus himself, on his lips a very standard greeting: 'Greetings!' They fall at his feet in worship and again are told not to be afraid before being given the same message as by the angel; to tell the disciples to go to Galilee where they will see Jesus themselves.

If we wanted to add any further confusion to this already tumultuous morning, we might ask why then in Luke's Gospel do we clearly have a meeting taking place between the disciples and Jesus later that day but still in Jerusalem, not in Galilee...? Whereas John has that wonderful story of Jesus appearing on the beach and cooking breakfast – in Galilee...

Perhaps we miss the point completely if we try to set all these accounts alongside each other and fit them together like a child's jigsaw puzzle. Perhaps what we need to capture and live with this morning is the utter amazement of someone rising from the dead and the life-changing thrill which must surely follow. I wish we knew what had happened to the guards after this experience; I wish we could read their report to Pilate... we don't have that, but we do have two thousand years of reports from countless people all around the world to how the resurrected Jesus has met them and changed their lives.

What of our own experience? As we read or hear this ancient story yet again this year, how does it resonate with our own lives? Have the words become so familiar that they roll off our souls like bath foam? Or are we, in spirit, there at the tomb ourselves, shaken by the appearance of the angel, startled by the reaction of the guards, reassured by the command not to fear, dumbfounded by the emptiness of a tomb where we saw a dead body lying, overcome with the need to throw ourselves at the feet of Jesus and worship a Risen Lord today? In some ways it would be so much easier if Jesus were still dead; if we could leave him behind Sunday by Sunday as we leave church and know that he will be in the same place next week, and all we have to do is offer the ointment of our worship and the service of our linen wrappings. But that's not the story, Resurrection – although it certainly is a happy ending, is also a scary beginning.

Like the guards, like the women, like the disciples when they too enter the story, we must be transformed by a meeting with the risen Jesus. Yes, we may well be filled with fear – it's okay for followers of Jesus to know that sense of fear. What on earth is going to happen next? To us? To our congregation? To the church throughout these islands, or indeed the world? But it's not for us who know the power of Christ in our lives to be made insensible by fear as the guards were – this is not our part in the story, to shake and become like corpses, although, if we're honest, there have been times when that has been the church's response. No, we also have the offer of great joy at this news, joy that fills and floods our bodies, minds and spirits, joy that overflows into energy and action, joy that takes us onto the streets, whether that's where we are (Jerusalem) or miles away (Galilee) for this exciting Good News has to be shared!

'Come', the angel said, 'Come, see the place where he lay' but then 'Go', 'Go quickly and tell his disciples'. So we have come to worship today. Having walked the journey of Lent and Holy Week we have come again to the place where we left Jesus on Friday, to the cross, and we find, as the women found, that he is not here. Just as the women looked hard at a tomb which was empty, although they expected to see a dead

body, we gaze at a cross which is now empty, and in doing so we receive all we need to be those who will go, go and live differently because if Jesus is not where we left him, then where is he? Maybe in our homes? Maybe at our side? Maybe amongst our families? Maybe in every empty seat in this church? Maybe out on the streets outside these windows? Maybe with those who are homeless in the doorways where they seek shelter, or with those who are hungry, in the queues at the foodbank. Maybe in refugee camps and battlefields wherever they are to be found, and in the earthquake-stricken sites and flooded rivers and drought-ridden wildernesses and disease-infested ghettos of the world... maybe Jesus is now in all these places, and maybe that's where we'll meet him this Easter Sunday.

The verses we read today from Paul's letter to the church in Colossae might help us as we seek to re-orientate our lives and meet the risen Jesus today and tomorrow and all the days of our life. Paul encourages us to 'seek the things which are above', to 'set our minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth'. He's describing a manner of life which is counter-cultural in a society which sets great store by the 'things that are on earth'. Whether those things are possessions or lifestyle, fame or success, status or reputation, even health or relationships. Any or all of these, and many other things, can entrap us if we make them our goal or our god. We are not called to be so tied to systems and structures – even those of the church – that we can't be free enough to look up, to realise that our real life is the life which is 'hidden with Christ in God' where all that really matters about us is treasured and held. Resurrection has the power to break whatever chains drag our spirits down, whatever it is which keeps us looking down. We can be joined with Christ in his Resurrection, then our true life is revealed – to us and to others – and we can know, day by day, the glory of God. Christ is Risen – Hallelujah!<sup>4</sup>

### Hymn:

594 STF – Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us OR

306 STF – Now the green blade rises from the buried grain

### Prayers of intercession

Today, our prayers have simple response. When I say 'Risen Jesus', let's join together in saying, 'breathe resurrection into your world'

Risen Jesus, **breathe resurrection into your world.**

*[The leader may wish to add particular names or situations, or invite others to do so].*

Easter God, on this day of joy we recognise that we still live in a world of sorrow. We pray for all who are weeping today – for lost opportunities, broken relationships, empty chairs at the table...

Risen Jesus, **breathe resurrection into your world.**

Easter God, on this day of hope we recognise that we still live in a world of despair. We pray for all who are dejected today – worried about the future, anxious about family and friends, trapped by the actions of others...

Risen Jesus, **breathe resurrection into your world.**

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<sup>4</sup> Reflection written by Jill Baker

Easter God, on this day of peace we recognise that we still live in a world of war. We pray for all who are affected by conflict – for Ukraine and Russia (and other places), for those experiencing violence at home, for all who work for peace...

Risen Jesus, **breathe resurrection into your world.**

Easter God, on this day of life we recognise that we still live in a world of death. We pray for all who mourn, all whose earthly life is coming to an end, all who feel life is not worth living...

Risen Jesus, **breathe resurrection into your world.**

Easter God, on this day of love, we recognise that we still live in a world of hatred. We pray for all who are discriminated against and victimised, all who are bullied, all who feel unloved...

Risen Jesus, **breathe resurrection into your world.**

Risen Jesus, we offer all our prayers in the power of your resurrection, a power which conquers evil, which fills us with hope and which can transform this world for your glory. Thanks be to God.

Amen.<sup>5</sup>

### **We will now take up the offering.**

On this Easter Day, we commit our gifts to you again, Lord God. We give you thanks, we sing our praise, and today we also give of the gifts we have received, so that your glory may be revealed here on earth, as in heaven.

We pray this, and all our prayers, in Jesus' name

Amen.<sup>6</sup>

### **Hymn:**

313 STF – Thine be the glory OR

305 STF – Low in the grave he lay

### **Blessing**

Go out from here, you resurrection people, go and live the truth of new life amongst death, light in the darkness, hope amongst despair.

You are the Easter people, may you know the risen power of Jesus in your hearts, your minds, your lives this week and forevermore.

Amen.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Prayers of intercession written by Jill Baker

<sup>6</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker

<sup>7</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker