

Worship at Home service Sunday 31st March 2024 with Revd Ian Forsyth

A call to worship:

Christ is risen! Alleluia! **He is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

Let us celebrate with Easter joy! Not out of habit. Not thinking only about chocolate and fun, but with a brand-new awareness of Christ's presence with us as our loving and risen Lord! Lord of the Church, Lord of our lives, and Lord of the world:

Christ is risen! Alleluia!

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

A gathering prayer

Living Lord Jesus, we come to worship in gratitude and joy. Come to us, dwell with us. Be with us as we explore the joy that the story of your risen life brings. **Amen.**

StF 298 Christ the Lord is risen today.

Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!

All creation joins to say, Alleluia!

Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!

Sing, ye heavens, let earth reply, Alleluia!

Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!

Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!

Vain the stone, the watch, the seal, Alleluia!

Christ has opened paradise, Alleluia!

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!

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!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0_ThKzTvIo

Bible readings

Psalm 118.1-2,14-24; Mark 16.1-8

Intercessions

Lord Jesus Christ, we remember today how you rose again, bringing new beginnings out of what seemed the end, a new chapter in the life of your Church that is still being written today.

We recall how your resurrection changed life for the disciples, calling them to let go of the past and embrace the future – their role no longer simply to follow but lead, to go out in your risen power and proclaim the good news. We know that life must change for us too, but sometimes it is harder than we first anticipated, moving on sometimes proves a painful business, asking more of us than we feel able to give. Take all has been **and direct all that shall be.**

Reach out to all who are finding endings hard to bear. We think of those reeling from the termination of employment, the breakdown of a relationship or eviction from their homes. Take all has been **and direct all that shall be.**

We think of those whose children are leaving home, family and friends moving away from each other, communities facing the upheaval of change. Take all has been **and direct all that shall be.**

We think of those coming to terms with unfulfilled ambitions, let down by broken promises, or overcome with sudden catastrophe. Take all has been **and direct all that shall be.**

We think of those disabled by disease, mourning the loss of loved ones, or suffering from terminal illness. Take all has been **and direct all that shall be.**

Lord Jesus Christ remind all again today that endings can lead to new beginnings, that from the old, new life can spring, and may that confidence touch our lives and bring hope to our troubled world. Take all has been **and open our hearts to all that shall be.**

Time to reflect:

Easter time evokes many different emotions and today I want to focus our hearts on two emotions that embody the energy of today. I want to take you back to that distant Sunday morning, the first day of the week, two people rose early, their sandaled feet covered in dust and strained by running. They went to the tomb, and met there an angel, who broke open their whole world,

saying 'He is not here: he is risen.' Feel the intensity of their emotion: smell it'.

Matthew tells us what they did, and what they felt. They ran and ran, with fear and great joy. We can imagine them running, with the hasty, gulping breath of fear, and with gurgling joy, with the outstretched hands and billowing cloak and squealing yelps of joy. Fear and great joy: at the heart of the resurrection, and at times the extremes of our heart.

During the pandemic there seemed so many reasons to be afraid, fear for ourselves, that we'll experience crushing disappointment, that our faith will turn to dust, that our hopes will be illusions and our critical friends be proved correct. Fear for those we love, fear that however much we love and however much we care we shall still have to face the awful moment of parting, of letting go, of aching loss and separation. Fear that we can't protect our loved ones from the horror of death. Anxiety about issues way beyond our control, from terrorism and war that destroy countries, to the addictions and diseases that destroy lives, to the greed and plunder that are destroying the earth.

So much to fear and yet also great joy. The joy of a spring lamb finding its rickety feet in a meadow; joy of a baby discovering how to swallow; joy of the song, when we have the words, and God has the tune; joy of the harvest, when all is fresh and mellow. The joy of friendship, of those we have known and loved through thick and thin. The joy of forgiveness when bitterness and failure don't get the last word. The joy of creation when we hear birds chirrup on a spring morning. The joy of being part of a team, when you believe in what you are doing and where you are going. The joy of the orchestra, about to break into a thrilling crescendo. The joy of a craftsman, perfecting his wood. Great joy. Great, great joy. So here we are, at the moment when the angel's words break open our lives, and we start to run with fear and great joy.

Fear and joy, the two poles, the two extremes of our human response to the awesome intimacy of God. Fear and joy run with us throughout our lives together, as constant

reminders of the cost and promise of following Jesus. Fear and joy, at the centre of our longings, at the heart of our desires. But there is a secret. It is a secret that we only glimpse at in this life. It is a secret that was first revealed to those two early risers on the first day of the week, while all creation breathed in the aroma of anticipation. It is the secret of Easter. It is a secret that I pray we will realise in the course of the year to come. It is a secret that is the climax of our gospel, a secret of the mystery of fear and joy. And the secret is this: joy wins.

StF 313 Thine be the glory.

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 graveclothes where thy body lay. **Refrain:**
*Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won.*

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: **[Refrain]**

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: **[Refrain]**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZ3zzXLayrY>

Sending out prayer:

Easter joy is to be shared, to be grown, to be treasured. As we go out into the world and a new week, may that joy be our strength, our inspiration, and our refuge in trouble.

Amen.

A Celtic Easter blessing.

Deep peace of the empty tomb.

Deep peace of the morning garden.

The eye of the Risen Christ be upon us in waking and sleeping.

The Risen Christ beside us. The Risen Christ within us. The God of life go with us. this day and always.

Amen.