

Worship@Home 20th April 2025 **Easter Sunday with Revd David Speirs**

Opening Prayer:

Holy God, on this Easter Sunday, we offer you our praise and thanks for the resurrection of your Son and our saviour: Jesus Christ. Grant that we, who being dead to sin and celebrating with joy, might participate in his risen life through the power of your Holy Spirit. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

StF 298 – Christ the Lord is risen today

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nRFL4mFtv14>

Christ the Lord is risen today;

Alleluia!

All creation joins to say:

Alleluia!

Raise your joys and triumphs high;

Alleluia!

Sing, you 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 burst the gates of hell:

Alleluia!

Lives again our glorious King;

Alleluia!

Where, O death, is now your sting?

Alleluia!

Once he died our souls to save;

Alleluia!

Where's your 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!

King of Glory! Soul of bliss!

Alleluia!

Everlasting life is this,

Alleluia!

You to know, your power to prove,

Alleluia!

Thus to sing, and thus to love:

Alleluia!

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Please read:

John 20: 1-18

<https://bible.oremus.org/?q=198633463>

Time to Reflect

I love visiting gardens in the spring when the flowers are coming into bloom. Gardens in the spring serve as a visual reminder that the winter has come to an end and that new life has arrived. This visual sign in nature reflects the wider reality of God's life giving and life sustaining power. It reminds us that the divine presence seeks to constantly recreate and remake all things anew within and around us.

The alternative New Testament reading that we have this Sunday, taken from John's Gospel, occurs within the garden where Jesus' body has been entombed. John's Gospel is unique in describing the location as a garden (John 19:41) and that description is subsequently followed by a distraught Mary mistaking the risen Christ as a gardener (John 20:15). In reflecting on this passage, I was reminded of another garden in scripture: the Garden of Eden. Whilst Adam's actions in that garden lead to humanity's sin and exile, Jesus' rising from a garden tomb marks the defeat of sin and death, revealing God's promise of new and eternal life in him.

John's gospel does not state why Mary comes to the garden tomb early on the Sunday morning. In Mark's Gospel the female disciples arrive early in order to anoint the body with spices (Mark 16:1-2) so this may have been the case in John's account as well. In any case, Mary comes to the tomb as her act of loving devotion towards Jesus. She also comes to the tomb expecting death but instead finds the stone rolled away and Jesus' body missing. When Mary comes to the tomb it is still dark. This description is not just a time stamp but also reflects the state that Mary is in.

Mary Magdalene was walking in darkness, not just the physical darkness of the early morning but also in the emotional darkness of grief. Yet in that place of darkness Jesus comes alongside her and transforms her grief into rejoicing as she realises that her Lord and friend has risen from the dead.

Mary wishes to cling to Jesus in the garden but he instructs her to go that she might be able to tell others of the resurrection. Jesus' commission to Mary gives her the title of apostle to the apostles, as she is the one who shares the first encounter with the risen Christ which signifies the defeat of death. For Mary, and for the rest of the disciples, it is a new beginning, which leads them to the next chapter in God's story. In Jesus the promises of God have been fully realised: Sin and death have been overcome and that victory has been shared with us.

When we walk through a spring garden, we are reminded that what was once dead can be made alive again. God brings new life to places that were formerly desolate. This promise of new life is not just something that we can experience in our future but it can form our present reality as well. Just like Mary, we too can encounter God in Christ and have our life transformed by him. Jesus offers us an eternal place within the Kingdom yet he also offers his life renewing power in the here and now through the gift of the Holy Spirit. This Easter, as we see the beautiful signs of renewed life around us in nature, may we also see the sign of new life and new beginnings within ourselves, our churches, and our communities. May we also like Mary share the good news of God's re-creation and life renewing resurrection power with those around us, to bring the hope of God to others.

Prayer of Intercession

You are invited to pray silently for:
The needs of the world...
The Church and its calling...
Loved ones going through difficult times...
For peace, justice, and reconciliation...
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven...

StF 313 – *Thine be the glory*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2uN-oeDl7Ag>

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 grave-clothes
where thy body lay:

*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:

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:

Edmond Budry (1854–1932)

translated by Richard Birch Hoyle (1875–1939)

Final Prayer

Now may the God of peace,
who brought again from the dead our Lord
Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the Sheep,
through the blood of the everlasting covenant,
make you perfect in every good work to do
God's will, through Jesus Christ,
to whom be glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Prayer by Revd Dr Jock Stein: Church of Scotland Weekly Worship
for Sunday 20 April 2025 Easter Day © 2025 Faith Action
Programme. Accessed at:
<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/worship/weekly-worship/monthly/2025-april/sunday-20-april-2025-easter-day-year-c> :