

BRIDE VALLEY CHURCHES – EASTER SUNDAY SERVICE 12TH APRIL 2020

(This week you will need a bible and a hymnbook or access to youtube for the bells and hymns)

Some bellringing to start us off <https://youtu.be/Bix3S52VHsE> chosen by Julian Piper
(Tower captain of St Mary's Burton Bradstock)

Greeting: Alleluia, Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He has given us new life and hope. He has raised Jesus from the dead.

Alleluia. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Opening prayer: Faithful one, whose word is life: come with saving power

To free our praise, inspire our prayer and shape our lives

For the Kingdom of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Prayers of penitence: Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord,

We come to you in sorrow for our sins,

And confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength

And not by the power of your resurrection.

In your mercy, forgive us.

Lord, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes

As faithless and not believing,

In your mercy, forgive us.

Lord, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone,

And doubted our home in heaven.

In your mercy, forgive us.

Lord, hear us and help us.

May the God of love and power

Forgive us and free us from our sins,

Heal and strengthen us by God's Spirit,

And raise us to new life in Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Collect:

God of Glory, by the raising of your Son

You have broken the chains of death and hell: fill your Church with faith and hope;

For a new day has dawned and the way to life stands open

In our saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Hymn: Christ triumphant, ever reigning

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=or3EogSdfPU> chosen this week by Paul Cheater

Gospel Reading: John 20 verses 1-19

Easter Reflection by the Reverend Jane Williams

There is no doubt that this Easter is an Easter like no other. And our experience of it is one that enables us to reflect more so than any other year on how the disciples might have been feeling in the days following the death of Jesus on the cross. The end of today's gospel reading from John chapter 20 tells us that the disciples were together in a house and the doors were locked through fear of the Jews. They are unable to gather together in any meaningful number to support one another. Maybe only leaving the safety of their homes in ones or twos to fetch food; maybe that had been Thomas' job.

We're told that Jesus had been placed inside the tomb which was then doubly sealed by a huge rock and a Roman seal, made secure we're told in Matthew's gospel at the request of the chief priests and Pharisees, so that his disciples couldn't come and steal the body and then claim that Jesus had risen on the third day as he himself had promised. A burial therefore without the usual anointing. A burial without any mourners allowed to be there. A burial with Jesus totally alone.

This Easter, during a time of lockdown, like the disciples, most of us are in the main confined to our homes, warned against going too far. The fear we share is a fear of contracting Covid-19 and of passing it on to those we love. The police have been given special powers to ensure we follow the instructions we've been given, instructions designed to keep us safe. And even in the places we are allowed to go for short periods of time, we're fearful of the consequences of getting too close to others, fearful that they might have the virus and pass it on. Fearful of shopping, of passing people in the street, of waiting in the queue at the chemist.

We're not able to see family members not living with us, go to work or school, or meet together as church. The usual support mechanisms for dealing with fear and anxiety aren't there anymore, and we can feel alone, particularly if we live on our own. Some of us have experienced the loss of loved ones during this period and haven't been able to say our goodbyes or attend the funeral.

We watch daily briefings on the television, checking in to see how many lives have been lost to coronavirus in the preceding 24 hours; the number of total deaths overall due to the pandemic; whether anyone notable, someone everyone knew has died. And, as the numbers increase, we may know someone personal, someone known to us, who has died too.

On that first Easter Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene was doing her own checking in. Someone who was both notable and personal had died. Almost everyone in the area knew who Jesus was – the itinerant rabbi who did signs and wonders, who some said was the long-awaited Messiah. But Mary knew him personally. The gospel of John doesn't introduce Mary Magdalene until very late in the story – until the moment of crucifixion, when we read that Mary Magdalene was keeping company with Jesus' mother and aunt at the cross. But it is clear that Mary knew Jesus personally. She was up at first light once the Sabbath was over to see the place where they had laid the one she called 'My Lord'.

You know what happens next. It's the story we tell every Easter Sunday. She arrives to see that the stone has been rolled away. She runs quickly to where Simon Peter and the other disciple were staying and they come quickly. They go in and see that the tomb is empty,

with the grave clothes neatly folded. And then they quickly return home, maybe afraid of being out in the open for too long.

Mary stays, weeping, and as she herself peers into the tomb, she sees two angels in white seated where Jesus' body had been. '*Why are you crying?*' they ask her. '*They have taken my Lord away and I don't know where they have put him,*' she replies. A man behind her then asks her the same question and, thinking he was the gardener who might have carried him away, she says, '*Tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.*' And Jesus simply speaks Mary's name, and she immediately recognises him.

He surprises her with the work of God, the work of new life and resurrection, a resurrection that is all about love, and relationship, and reconciliation. And Jesus says he must return to the Father. Why? To prepare a place for us. So that where he is, we may be also.

She returns to the disciples telling them that she has seen the Lord but, unlike the first time, there doesn't appear to be any attempt to return to the garden to see for themselves what Mary has told them. They retreat back to where they are staying and it's behind these locked doors that, later that day – the evening of the first day of the week, that Jesus suddenly appears. And what Jesus brings into this situation, this place of fear and confusion, is *peace* - a peace that only *he* can bring. In his first words to them, he says '*Peace be with you*'.

And it's into *this* Easter, an Easter like no other, that Jesus still brings peace.

If Easter tells us anything, it is that God's love outlasts everything and anything else. It tells us that death does not, and will never, have the last word. Easter breathes God's life over us again and whispers into our waiting hearts – hearts that this year may be filled with uncertainty and fear – that his '*kingdom endures from generation to generation*'. It tells us again that those who trust in the Lord will not be put to shame as he willingly went to the cross for us. It confirms that though, in current times, we live through the Garden of Gethsemane, the cross, and the tomb, God guarantees the resurrection. A resurrection that will be just as the first, centred on love, relationship and reconciliation.

So, may the God of hope fill you with joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, this Easter and always. **Amen.**

Affirmation of Faith

Let us declare our faith in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ died for our sins
In accordance with the Scriptures;
He was buried;
He was raised to life on the third day
In accordance with the scriptures;
Afterwards he appeared to his followers,
And to all the apostles;
This we have received,
And this we believe.

Amen.

Prayers by our Lay Minister Mike Read

Let us pray:

We pray for our Bishops; our leaders; for Rector Jane and the ministry team together with all who are helping to deal with the problems created by coronavirus.

Risen Lord Jesus, you were an early riser that first Easter morning; you needed no alarm to raise you from your three-day slumber. The engines of creation went into reverse and you rose, scattering to the winds the remnants of death. Raise us, we pray, from the slumbers of our too-easy faith and put us to work in the garden of your new creation.

You are risen. We are risen. Alleluia!

Risen Lord Jesus, you caught the world by surprise when you broke the steel cords of death. Help us to believe that all things are possible, that nations can make peace, that men and women can love their enemies, that justice can prevail and the meek can inherit the earth. Make us part of the revolution that your resurrection began, especially in those nations where there is war, injustice and persecution, and for refugees seeking a place of refuge.

You are risen. We are risen. Alleluia!

Risen Lord Jesus, you have given us thousands of mornings, but none like this. Give us eyes to see the outline of the new world that your disciples began to see that day. Help us to see all of life in the light that streams from the empty tomb. Help us to hear the captives' song of freedom and to taste the song of sweetness of release as eyes are opened and lives are made whole. We pray for any we know who are trapped in difficult situations and long for a way out of the tomb in which they feel imprisoned ...

You are risen. We are risen. Alleluia!

Risen Lord Jesus, you met your special friends at precisely their point of need – Mary Magdalene, Thomas, the two walking to Emmaus, Peter at the lakeside. And to each you brought hope and the promise of life in abundance. Meet us, your Church, in the same way, with hope and abundant life, so that we can bask in the light of your resurrection and reflect that light into a muddled world.

You are risen. We are risen. Alleluia!

Risen Lord Jesus, may this Easter story echo afresh around the world and bring millions to wonder, and to weep with joy, at the entrance of the empty tomb.

You are risen. We are risen. Alleluia!

Gloria in Excelsis

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 God 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.

Final Hymn: Thine Be The Glory <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GaoV5w2Qfag>

Alleluia, Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He has given us new life and hope. He has raised Jesus from the dead.

God has claimed us as his own.

He has brought us out of darkness.

He has made us light to the world.

Alleluia. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

The Peace:

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

The peace of the Lord be always with you: **and also with you.**