

# Easter Morning

12<sup>th</sup> April 2020

## Virtual Harbour Service

Christ Is Risen - He is risen indeed

Hymn: 410: Christ the Lord is risen today

Prayer:

Dear loving, heavenly Father we thank you that we can come to You this Easter morning. It is unlike any other Easter we have experienced, when we are unable to meet to sing the praise of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, risen from the dead. We come in sadness and bewilderment, feeling that we need so much to know your living and loving touch at this time of sorrow and pain in our nation and in our world.

We thank you that Christ has died for our salvation, for our wholeness and healing. We confess the darkness of our world and the darkness of our own lives and seek Your mercy for our sin and failure. Gracious Lord, today we would look beyond the darkness of Calvary, to a tomb that is empty, to a stone that is rolled away and hear the angel's voice proclaim "He is not here but is risen". Today we thank You that He is risen indeed, alive to be for us and with us. We like Mary, would hear His voice gently calling our own name.

Lord we bring before you all who are affected by the Corona virus and are suffering, or sad or bereaved at the present time that they will know your strength raising them up. We pray for all who are struggling to care in hospitals, care homes and in the community, that they will have your protection and power to endure all that they experience in their duties and sacrificial service. We remember those who are providing food supplies and maintaining essential services. We pray for all scientists seeking to develop a vaccine and possible cure, that their efforts will be rewarded.

Lord, graciously hear us.

We continue in the words of the prayer that Jesus taught us: -

*Our Father, who art in Heaven. Hallowed be Thy name.  
Thy Kingdom come: Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
For Yours is the Kingdom, the power and the Glory  
For ever.  
Amen*

Reading: Matthew 28:1-10

Hymn: 426: All Heaven declares the Glory of the risen Lord

Reading: Corinthians 15:1-7, 20

Reflection: **Out of Darkness**

We begin in deep darkness. It was dark on that Friday we call Good Friday when Jesus died alone. All hope appeared to have gone. The onlookers beat their breasts and dispersed. The women who had been so faithful left the scene. His mother, Mary, went home with John, and any other disciples still

watching, drifted away. Joseph of Arimathea placed Jesus' body in the darkness of his prepared tomb, observed by the women.

On the morning of the first day of the week, it was still dark when Mary Magdalene and the women left home expecting to embalm a lifeless body. It seems the dawn was just breaking as they journeyed to the dark tomb, hoping there might be just enough light to allow them to carry out their task. They expected to find only death in the darkness.

But the miracle of Easter is that when they came to the tomb, there was no stone blocking out the light of that wonderful dawn. In amazement, they saw the dazzling appearance of the angel of the Lord, like lightning and clothed in brilliance. Light and life were his message as he announced, "He is risen" and invited them to see the empty tomb. The women rushed to tell Peter and John who ran to the place and confirm the empty tomb. Seeing the undisturbed grave clothes, John believes the truth of Jesus' resurrection. Grave clothes, stone and guarding soldiers had not prevented Jesus from rising.

As Mary Magdalene lingered, the Lord met her and called her by name. He knew her, as he knows us by name and the dawn broke over her dejected life. Her life had light again.

The light of resurrection life had chased away the darkness of mockery, injustice, cruelty, pain and the loneliness of the cross.

We are reminded of the words of John's Gospel, "The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it" or as the Message says, "The Darkness has not put it out" (John 1:5)

Today we start in darkness. As the Corona virus devastates the world and our country, we feel the darkness all around us, the darkness of disease, death and fear. Some too are affected by the darkness of personal tragedy, illness and loss. But there is great hope that the darkness will pass, and the light of life will be restored to us, to our nation and to the world. For those living in fear, suffering and sorrow, we have the God of all comfort to strengthen and renew.

We also know the darkness of sin in our world and in our own lives. We have sinned against God, against one another, and against our world, by living as though He does not exist. The present crisis reminds us we are not in ultimate control. The book of Revelation warns of plagues devastating humankind, with the saddest comment "They still did not repent" (Rev.9 20). We are instructed to be reconciled to God; Christ's death for us makes this possible and His resurrection assures us of a new life in Him as we trust Him. Just as the light of the risen Christ shone on the disciples and the women, so we too can know that light of forgiveness and restoration. We move from the darkness to resurrection light, from despair to hope, from guilt to forgiveness, and we rejoice that this is given to us now because Jesus died and rose again.

Paul tells us that we were once in darkness "but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light" (Ephesians 5:8). He also reminds us, as The Message puts it, "It started when God said 'Light up the darkness' and our lives filled up with light as we saw and understood God in the face of Christ, all bright and beautiful" (2 Corinthians 4 :6).

Our prayer for Easter day is that whatever darkness we may be experiencing, hope and joy are present for us as we trust in the risen Saviour. Let us grasp this great Easter truth and go forward rejoicing in His light and life.

Christ is risen. He is risen indeed.

Hymn: 419: Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son.

The Grace