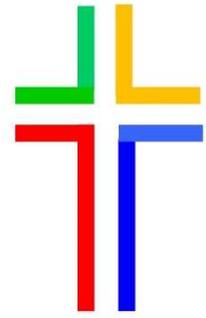


# Week St Mary Methodist Church – Sunday 12 April Easter Sunday



This is the fourth Sunday of worshipping remotely and, it being Easter Sunday, will be a particularly difficult time to not be part of our usual congregation. However, whilst we may be unable to physically gather, we do know that we are a worldwide fellowship of believers, and that this Easter Sunday we can celebrate the resurrection of Jesus alongside Christians all over the world – many of whom are, like us, under Coronavirus lockdown.

## PRAYER

Lord, the women came to the garden still grieving for Jesus who had died. We are feeling this very differently, For we know that Jesus is risen. But as we worship today, help us to catch something of the quiet expectation of that morning.

The moving of the stone, and the coming of the angel amazed them. We know that it happened; but help us to be ready to be amazed by You today, for You are an amazing God, and with You all things are possible. Amen

## READING FOR TODAY Matthew 28:1-10 (NIVUK)

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

<sup>2</sup>There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. <sup>3</sup>His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. <sup>4</sup>The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

<sup>5</sup>The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. <sup>6</sup>He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see

the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup>Then go quickly and tell his disciples: "He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him." Now I have told you.'

<sup>8</sup>So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup>Suddenly Jesus met them. 'Greetings,' he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshipped him. <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.

## REFLECTION

Matthew's account is probably the least read of the accounts of the resurrection; we nearly always favour Luke or John. Matthew's is quite different because of the earthquakes and angels sitting on the tombstone.

However these things bring out something really important. Reading the other accounts would lead you to believe that the resurrection could have been a spontaneous event rather like leaving a bulb in a cupboard and then returning a few weeks later and seeing it come to life. Matthew makes it clear that this is not the case. Whatever you make of the earthquake, angel and guards, Matthew is saying that this is a deliberate intervention by God, acting in a one-off special way to give Jesus a new life. This is a Godly approval of Jesus' life and mission. All his words and actions have won God's commendation, for if they didn't then, quite frankly, God would not have acted in this amazing way to give him new life.

This means that we have to re-examine the whole of Jesus' life in the light of his resurrection and God's approval. This includes the claims of divinity (in his words and actions) and the miracles which are all affirmed, all confirmed, all shown to be true by the resurrection itself. Matthew's telling of the resurrection says that here is an approved lifestyle to study and to emulate.

Of course, we are human, and we fail to copy this perfect lifestyle of Jesus. However, the resurrection says that we can leave all that, our past failures, weakness and hurts behind. The process of confessing, repenting and accepting forgiveness is a very healing process and is something that can change a life for ever. Many of us have seen this happen in people and it is something of lasting and persistent significance.

These things mean that far from being just an event that happened 2,000 years ago, the resurrection reminds us that we are a church with a mission to help and support men and women - by pointing to the life of Jesus as the ideal model of how life should be lived, and by encouraging men and women to leave their past behind, seek forgiveness and healing and move into the new life offered by Christ

### **PRAYER FOR OTHERS**

Lord, at this difficult time of pandemic, we are conscious that there are people all over the world suffering its consequences. We pray for those who normally live a hand to mouth existence in poverty and who now are in desperate straits.

We pray for those who are migrant workers in a foreign land and have no chance of returning to their families.

We pray for those who are refugees living in temporary encampments and who dread what the disease may do in those conditions.

We pray for doctors and nurses in every country, treating and caring for those who are ill, yet knowing that by doing so they are placing themselves at greater risk.

We pray for those who are particularly at risk because of their age or underlying health issues and recognise the overwhelming worry this causes.

Finally, we pray for our own congregation, for those who are ill or in other difficulty, and look forward to the day when we can worship together again. **Amen**

### **HYMN**

*(H&P 190 STF 297)*

Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.  
His cross stands empty to the sky.  
Let streets and homes with praises ring.  
His love in death shall never die.

Christ is alive! No longer bound  
to distant years in Palestine,  
he comes to claim the here and now,  
and conquer every place and time.

Not throned above, remotely high,  
untouched, unmoved by human pains  
but daily, in the midst of life,  
our Saviour, with the Father reigns.

In every insult, rift and war,  
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,  
he suffers still, yet loves the more,  
and lives, though ever crucified.

Christ is alive! His Spirit burns  
through this and every future age,  
till all creation lives and learns  
his joy, his justice, love and praise.

### **BLESSING**

The women ran from the tomb with joy  
and rushed off to tell the others. May we  
be filled with that joy this Easter and with  
a desire to share the news that Jesus is  
alive. And the blessing of God, Father, Son  
and Holy Spirit, Be upon you and remain  
with you always. Amen.

*"Our Lord has written the promise of the resurrection, not in books alone, but in every leaf in springtime". Martin Luther*