

# 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2024

## The paper-version Service



**To Begin:** Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe,

light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service.

**Opening Prayer:** Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**Song:**

Jesus Christ is risen today,  
alleluia!  
our triumphant holy day,  
alleluia!  
who did once, upon the cross,  
alleluia!  
suffer to redeem our loss,  
alleluia!

Hymns of praise then let us  
sing, alleluia!  
unto Christ, our heavenly King,  
alleluia!

who endured the cross and  
grave,  
alleluia!  
sinners to redeem and save,  
alleluia!

But the pains which He  
endured,  
alleluia!  
our salvation have procured;  
alleluia!  
now above the sky He's King,  
alleluia!  
where the angels ever sing:  
alleluia!



The Good  
Shepherd  
Four Marks

Responding to God's Love

## **1 Corinthians 15.1-11, John 20.1-18 – Risen**

### **The Sermon by Rev. Howard Wright**

The resurrection of Jesus is a fact to history – a thing done and that happened – there are no other plausible theories. Jesus rose physically from the dead. He was truly dead, the Romans were sadly brutal and efficient at dealing death. And then he was truly alive – nothing else explains the transformation of the disciples.

It can be well argued that no other human event has impacted human history than the person of Jesus because of his resurrection.

In creation God makes us. He makes us as friends, in his image, uniquely, out of all creatures, able to relate to him. This depth of relationship is indicated in the announcement of the God who walks with us in the cool of the evening. Here is a relationship of friends engaging in an end of the day catch-up – think of the way in which in Mediterranean countries everyone gathers at tables outside their homes to mingle with friends and neighbours.

This relationship is spoiled by our failure to trust that he wants the best for us. We doubt and we reject his ‘Word’ and so, reject Him. The consequences are catastrophic – we see this daily in the news, but also in our own inability to live at peace with ourselves, others, creation, and with God. The way back seems impossible, the friendship and Eden is lost, how can it be regained.

But God does something remarkable. God loves us so much (John 3:16), that he comes to rescue us in Jesus. His rescue is not to get us back to Eden – his rescue is a better fix than what was broken.

Through Jesus’ death upon the cross we have peace again with God (Romans 5:1). Jesus takes our sin, our punishment and dies for us. The cost of mending what was broken is incomprehensibly immense – the crucifixion of the only ever innocent person, the one who was God. But what Jesus wins for us is not a return to friendship, and back to the garden, but an

invitation to family, and into God's home. We are invited to be children of God, co-heirs with Christ – princes and princesses of the King.

In our house recently a lamp was broken, for the third time! In our home we try to fix things – and so I did, and it's not a great fix – the pottery base remains clearly cracked and some of the pieces were unusable or went up the Hoover, and so there are gaps.

As humans we are rarely able to recover something broken and make it better – often the only option is a new thing – but there's a cost. God's gift to us is a new thing at vast cost, but this new thing is a vastly improved from what was broken. If our children, whom we love break something we rarely would treat them to something massively better, but God treats us with extraordinary love!

God's gift begins now, with our 'yes'. It is a gift, it can't be earned, but when we receive the gift we find that we are transformed. We don't have to change ourselves to get it, but having it will change us.

Today we have access to God as children, we have the promises of transformational power that turns the truly dreadful Friday to the Good Friday. And God's transformational resurrection power is still at work today, transforming dead-ends to highways, darkness to light, sadness to joy, despair to hope, and death to life.

So, how will you live?

I'd encourage you to live as people with the cross before you, looking to Jesus, following him, his ways and words (See Hebrews 12:2). And in all the changing and challenging circumstances of life, not to focus on the darkness but to look to the light and hope of Christ (see Philippians 3:7-14). God has won us, and won for us a wonderful freedom and glorious future, let us rejoice in it.

Hallelujah, Christ is risen – He is risen indeed, Hallelujah!

**Easter Sunday:** Lord of all life and power, who through the mighty resurrection of your Son overcame the old order of sin and death to make all things new in him: grant that we, being dead to sin and alive to you in Jesus Christ, may reign with him in glory; to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be praise and honour, glory and might, now and in all eternity. **Amen.**

**The Lord's Prayer:** *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.*

**Blessing** to be declared over yourselves, The Good Shepherd, the communities around us and our whole nation. 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV).

**The Notices:** We are now holding services in the building on Sundays at 8am and 9.30am, and are live streaming the 9.30 service. This Paper Service will continue for the moment and is generally available the week after the service.

- Tea and Chat: April 17<sup>th</sup> at 2pm in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Bowls: April 17<sup>th</sup> at 2pm in the Church.
- Coffee and Questions: April 24<sup>th</sup> at 10.30am in Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise: TBA
- The Community Cupboard, 2:45pm every Thursday in Church.
- COGS Tots and Tinytots are on Mondays.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.