



THE METHODIST CIRCUIT OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE

4th April 2021. Easter Sunday

This act of worship has been prepared for you to use while you are unable to attend worship in a church building.

Call to Worship

Alleluia! Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Hymn: 298 Singing the Faith

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

We pray together

O Lord God, Eternal Creator, you dwell in the hearts of all who worship you today. We praise and thank you for raising Jesus from the dead and setting us free to worship and adore you. To you belongs all the honour!

Jesus Christ, Merciful Saviour, you meet us when we turn to you. On that first Easter morning you rose from the grave to conquer sin and death for ever. To you belongs all the glory!

Holy Spirit, Divine Presence, you are the very Breath of Life. We receive the peace of the risen

Christ as did those first disciples in the Upper Room. To you belongs all the praise!

Pause

O God, the Three-in-One, we confess that our lives have been full of death and hate instead of life and love. Forgive us our sins, and strengthen in us all that is good.

Pause

As we receive your assurance of forgiveness, you fill us afresh with love and life, compelling us to pour them out into the lives of others. **Amen.**

John 20.1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.' Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went towards the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at

the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.' When she had said this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.' Jesus said to her, 'Mary!' She turned and said to him in Hebrew, 'Rabbouni!' (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, 'Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." ' Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord'; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Prayer

Jesus Christ, we greet you!
Your hands still have holes in them,
Your feet are wet from the dew;
And with the memory of our names
Undimmed by three days of death
You meet us,
Risen from the grave.
We fail to understand how;
We puzzle at the reason why.

But you have come:
not to answer our questions,
But to show your face.

You are alive
And the world can rejoice again.
Alleluia! **Amen**

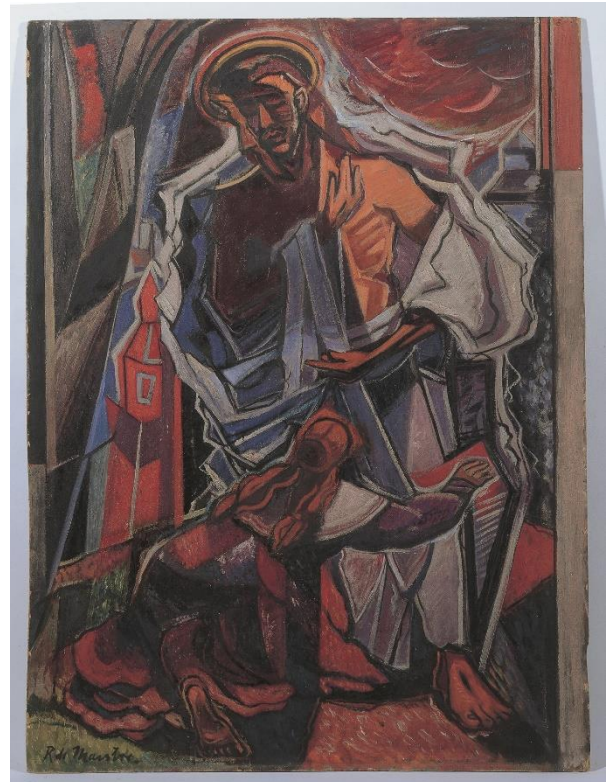
Hymn: 309 Singing the Faith

See what a morning, gloriously bright,
With the dawning of hope in Jerusalem;
Folded the grave clothes, tomb filled with light,
As the Angels announced Christ is risen!
See God's salvation plan,
Wrought in love, born in pain, paid in sacrifice,
Fulfilled in Christ, the Man,
For he lives: Christ is risen from the dead!

See Mary weeping, 'Where is he laid?'
As in sorrow she turns from the empty tomb;
Hears a voice speaking, calling her name;
It's the Master, the Lord raised to life again!
The voice that spans the years,
Speaking life, stirring hope, bringing peace to us,
Will sound till he appears,
For he lives: Christ is risen from the dead!

One with the Father, Ancient of Days,
Through the spirit who clothes faith with certainty;
honour and blessing, glory and praise
To the King crowned with power and authority!
And we are raised with him,
Death is dead, love has won, Christ has conquered ;
And we shall reign with him,
For he lives: Christ is risen from the dead!

Stuart Townend and Keith Getty



Reflection

For Mary, the moment of recognition came when he said her name. When she had arrived at the tomb in the dark hours of the morning and found the stone had been rolled back it served only to convince her that he was dead. Grave robbers had decided. The angels, who are a symbol of the fact that God was at work in the tomb, do

nothing to shake her from her theory that his body has been stolen.

We can only speculate about why she did not immediately recognise the person she thought was a gardener. Then he said her name.

What happened next was more than mere recognition. She was not just bumping into Jesus unexpectedly after a couple of days absence. The crucified Jesus had become the risen Christ. The person she had loved in life because of his kindness to her, the one who had taught her of God's grace and given her back her self-respect was certainly a great teacher. In the moment of recognition, she realised he was someone much more. We can only begin to imagine the thoughts and feelings that were whirling around inside her when he said her name. But then he said a strange thing: "Do not hold on to me."

What was she in danger of doing that provoked these words of rebuke from Jesus?

Do not cling to me because you must tell the others.

It must have been tempting for Mary to try cling onto that experience of being with the living Jesus and to keep him all to herself. But she must not, she must go to the others and tell them.

Easter faith is not private faith, it is public faith. Jesus is not risen simply to give us private moments of closeness to God. His rising is a sign of how God is present and active in the world. Those who encounter the risen Christ are called to bear witness to this reality.

Do not cling to me because I have not yet ascended.

For convenience, the church follows the pattern of Jesus' resurrection and ascension as it is recorded by Luke. The gap of 40 days gives us time to reflect on it over a period of weeks in our worship. We cannot do justice to resurrection, ascension and the gift of the spirit all in one day. But the other gospels, particularly John, do not separate these themes out nearly as much as Luke.

For John, the mission of the one who was sent from heaven by the Father is not complete until

he makes his return. Only then can his Spirit be poured out into the life of the world.

For Mary to try to cling onto Jesus was to stand in the way of the completion of his mission. He has more to offer her than relief from grief and the pain of death.

Only when he was no longer limited to the confines of time and space was his work done. Only when his Spirit's power and presence could be known by all people in all times and in all places was his ministry complete.

This is what the Risen Christ will do for Mary and the others if they do not hold onto him.

With God the last word is not death, but life. Not defeat but victory. Easter means that he offers us a new beginning. Because Jesus is risen, there is the possibility of a new world for you, and a new you for the world. Because Jesus is risen, he offers you a new joy, a new peace and a new purpose in life.

Hymn: 297 Singing the Faith

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.

Women and men, in age and youth,
Can feel the spirit, here the call,
And find the way, the life, the truth,
Revealed in Jesus, freed for all.

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.

Brian Wren

We pray for others

When people weep
because they are oppressed,
Because they are a destitute,
Because they are being destroyed by warfare,
Because all hope for the future is dead,

Come, Risen Lord wipe away all tears.

When people weep
Because they are anxious and afraid,
Because they are ill,
Because they are racked with pain,
Because someone they love has died,

Come, Risen Lord wipe away all tears.

When people weep knew line because they are
lonely,
Because no one listens to them,
Because people have been cruel,
Because they long for death,

Come, Risen Lord wipe away all tears.

When people weep
At the sins they have committed,
at the emptiness of their lives,
At their failures in loving,
At the thought of death,

Come, risen Lord wipe away all tears.

Risen Lord, come to us, even when we cannot
recognise you through our tears, and call us, that
our lives may be transformed by Easter joy.
Amen.

We give thanks

Blessed are you, God, for this day, for this first
day:

On which the story of our making
Becomes one with the hope of all things made
new.

This is the day of liberation,
When you call us into life through death.
Blessed are you, God, for your call to freedom:

For rolling away the stones that imprisoned the
spirit;
For the women stumbling, in the half light of the
dawn,

Into the light of your glory.
You open up the mystery which we celebrate
with all your people! Alleluia!

We say the Lord's Prayer

Hymn: 313 Singing the Faith

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:

Thine be the glory...

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:

Thine be the glory...

Edmond Budry. Translated by Richard Birch Hoyle

Blessing

Go in peace: the Risen Christ goes before you.
Go in joy: the stone is rolled away; the Risen
Christ goes with you.
Go in love and strength: the Risen Christ lives
within you. Amen.

Acknowledgements

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Roy de Maistre - Noli me tangere (Touch me not)