

'See what a morning'

Leader The Lord is risen

All **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

Call to worship

A new morning - a morning of hope, joy and amazement, a morning on which everything we know is turned on its head; and on this morning on which everything we know closes in round us we say, 'what a morning' - and turn our heads and hearts once more toward the bright, shining light of Easter - and worship in the name of the risen Lord

BPW252 'Jesus Christ is risen today!'

Leader On Easter Day we celebrate life. The birds are singing and the sun warms the earth, even as much is lost still we proclaim

All **Alleluia, Christ is risen, Jesus lives!**

Leader On Easter Day we celebrate victory. Christ lived in a wounded world and died for a sinful world, and even though much still is wounded and mired in sin; still we proclaim

All **Alleluia, Christ is risen, Jesus lives!**

Leader On Easter Day we celebrate a living hope. Though today much still is lacking in hope, we hear, we believe and we proclaim, Christ lives!

All **Alleluia, Christ is risen, Jesus lives!**

Opening prayer

Lord and living God, for life, for victory, for hope we praise you today; life born out of death, victory snatched from the jaws of defeat; hope where all hope seemed lost – we praise you and worship your holy name.

We have followed the painful way of Jesus through Lent and Holy Week in the midst of this most difficult of times; and on Good Friday borne witness to the iron law of that day, where death purported to rule but we come gladly, rejoicing, though we are still filled with concern, to hear again the glad words 'Christ is risen!' – to enter into the mystery of the strange words 'He is not here, He is risen!' and to proclaim to any and all who will listen, 'He is risen, He is risen indeed'

For, we believe, death - though deathliness is all around - no longer has its way with us and with the world, destruction - though much is being destroyed - is no longer the last word; fear and grief - though those things stalk our world - shall find the way into our lives barred by hope and victory and endless life itself – Christ is risen, he is risen indeed!

We rejoice, and against the power of the things we see all around us, we say and sing and pray and proclaim 'Christ is risen, he is risen indeed!'

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

'In Christ alone'

The Grace is said: *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.*

Matthew 28.1-10

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. 2 And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. 4 For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. 5 But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples, "He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him." This is my message for you.' 8 So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 Suddenly Jesus met them and said, 'Greetings!' And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.'

Sermon

Do not be afraid - that is the message of Easter this year. As suffering continues all around the world and *all* our lives are affected. 'do not be afraid'

Not that fear is much in evidence amongst us at the moment. Most people over the last couple of weeks have been pretty sanguine about all this, as you'd expect really. Thankfully the virus hasn't come *that* close - and everyone I've spoken with has been carefully observing the 'social distancing' rules and being diligent about washing hands - and making the most of the 'lockdown'(clearing out cupboards, tending their gardens - I'll bet the nation's gardens will never have looked so good after all this - taking up hobbies.)

Still, behind all this, real concerns - for distant isolated loved ones; for businesses mothballed; for jobs needing to be done in new ways 'at home' - not always easily, by all accounts - for the health and welfare of friends, loved ones and neighbours: concerns, not yet fear..

Mind you in rural India, in sub-Saharan Africa, in many other places, fear is much nearer the surface; where social distancing is impossible in an overflowing shanty town or refugee camp, where working from home is impossible 'cos there's no internet; where health care resources are virtually non-existent - fear...

For most of history people have had to live with a level of fear that we haven't had to live with - until now; a marauding tribe might swoop down from the hills and rape and pillage your farm and family; a storm might destroy everything you own in an instant or leave you up to your neck in flood water with no one to help; a disease might strike - only for the last 70 years or so have we had the luxury of living in a world free of the fear of diphtheria, typhoid, measles, plagues etc, etc - and then only some of us.

It's almost as if fear is the natural state of human life - the NHS, insurance companies, a welfare state - these things have quelled fear for many but without them, before them, in their absence - fear

Do not be afraid. It was in such a world that Easter came. A great earthquake; an angel of the Lord, an empty tomb; a strange message; Jesus himself - the women were afraid; the guards at the tomb were afraid, the disciples, I imagine, were afraid.

Do not be afraid - that's the message of Easter; not just comforting words, but a real change in the way the world works - no need anymore to fear death; no need anymore to fear other's opinions, no need, anymore to fear what the world might do - Jesus is risen..do not be afraid

I have this idea that it's been hard to talk about Easter in recent years because 'background fear' has pervaded human history has been pushed away. 'Do not be afraid' doesn't mean much when you're not afraid much anyway - when life's pretty good, and long, and death is pushed away for most people most of the time, too far in the future to worry about. 'Do not be afraid'? - I'm not afraid; I've got the strength of the Insurance companies around me (as an advert used to say); I've got a GP at the end of the street and a hospital within a mile and a steady income and I go on holiday as often as I want and there's plenty to do, what with cinemas, restaurants, clubs, sports fixtures and all the rest - afraid? *Moi?*

But now - maybe we're just experiencing again what humanity has always experienced - against which centuries of research and science and economic development and medical advance have fought successfully, to our great good.

But now - you can't fight a virus, they say; it's indiscriminate, can strike where and when and who it likes - and the hospital's overwhelmed, and the GP hasn't got a mask, and the insurance company can't pay out - and your income's shot and the queue outside the supermarket gets longer by the day..

Be afraid..be very afraid - the horror film phrase comes ever closer.

But *in such a world* Jesus is risen; that's what we claim and proclaim - do not be afraid. Look, it's only Easter Day, yet; it'll take weeks, months, years, before they come to a fuller appreciation of what it means that Jesus is alive..

But in a Roman dungeon, when the state tried to beat and burn the faith away - they stayed faithful to the Easter message 'do not be afraid'; and in an English village, when the authorities persecuted believers to within an inch of their lives, they stayed faithful to the Easter message 'do not be afraid' - and on a prison gallows, when the Nazis hung Dietrich Bonhoeffer with, as Keith Clements puts it 'prolonged barbarity', he stayed faithful to the Easter message 'do not be afraid' - at least I imagine he did, how else could he have said 'this is the end, for me the beginning of life'?

Do not be afraid. Fact is, for all history human beings have always lived with fear; the Easter message is for all history - do not be afraid.

Our road has started a Whatsapp group, for people to keep in touch, pass on useful info. Words of encouragement, that kind of thing. A couple down the road have been putting up messages and links to their church - and offending some, so they've moved over to a private group now.

Can't say any of what they've posted has been *that* inspiring - a bit twee; too religious for my taste - and for lots of others, apparently

Still I wonder if they'd just put up the Easter message what the reaction would be - maybe I should have done so - Jesus is risen; everything's changed from now on - virus; shortages; lockdowns, isolation - behind what you can see is a changed world because Jesus is risen - do not be afraid.

'Sing alleluia to the Lord'

Offering & The Peace

The economic effects of the coronavirus response are profound indeed and in hard times folk always resort to belt-tightening - the instinct for self-preservation is very strong. But we who are called to live by faith are called *always* to give freely. For we believe in a God who has offered himself, who has *given* - so we give, by faith, of our hearts and of our lives,

And 'in these and all our gifts' as in this Bread & Wine we look to the transformation of the things of earth into the things of heaven

Communion

The table of the Lord is spread, it is for those who will come and see in broken bread and poured out wine – not mere symbols, but the very substance of his life shed for us on the Cross and raised again the third day. The risen Christ is present among his people and it is here that we meet him. The invitation is for all those who are seeking him and who are weary of their sin and doubt to come and share the feast.

Confession

Lord our God, here we confess our part in a fearful world, where people huddle together for security, and look for salvation only among the things they already know. We confess the church's fear and its inward-looking spirit, rarely ready to let the Word of life go in a needy world.

We confess our own fear; fear of our own thoughts, fear of each other, fear of new understanding.

Father forgive us and set us free once more in the spirit of the risen Christ to live and be unafraid; to live in hope, in joy and in love in Jesus' name, who is Lord and Saviour of all.

Listen to the good news before the Cross, 'Do not be afraid, for I have overcome the World' listen to the good news of resurrection – 'Do not be afraid' – for he who was dead is alive for evermore.

Thanks be to God, Amen.,

Institution

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you; the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and said, take, eat, this is my body which is for you, do this in remembrance of me. In the same way after supper he took the cup saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this whenever you drink it in memory of me – for whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Thanksgiving

Thank you our Father for what you have made and given to us: thank you for who you have given and what He has done for us, thank you that he lives, and that His spirit breathes new life into the world – and thank you for this sign and reality, where the good news is once again set free in the light of his rising.

God our Father, pour out the Holy Spirit on all your people, that we may have faith, and upon these gifts of bread and wine and this eating and drinking, that this may be for us the mystery of the body and blood of our risen Lord – so that we may receive Christ to ourselves once again, for the strengthening of our faith, the assuring of our hope, and the deepening of our love.

Responses

- Leader** Here is bread
- All** **For us to feed on Christ**
- Leader** Here is wine
- All** **For us to refresh our souls**
- Leader** How shall we eat?
- All** **At Easter we come to the banquet of God's Kingdom,**
- Leader** To celebrate the risen Christ
- All** **He makes us whole**
- Leader** How shall we drink?
- All** **At Easter we drink the new wine of the Kingdom,**
- Leader** To celebrate the risen Christ
- All** **He brings us new life.**
- Leader** The risen Christ bids us eat, and drink, and live
- All** **We eat and drink in faith**

Bread and Wine

The Bread is broken, the Wine is poured and in our own homes we eat and drink together..

We have broken bread in a broken world and poured out wine in a suffering world and in the eating and drinking we have entered into the mystery of the body and blood of our Lord, by which we are made whole and healed -

Thanks be to God

Prayer after communion

Strengthen for service, Lord, the hands that have touched holy things:

Our ears have heard your word – now make us deaf to clamour and dispute, and ready to listen for every whisper of peace and reconciliation in the world

Our tongues have sung your praise. Now make them free from deceit, and ready to speak only the truth in love

Our eyes have witnessed the drama of salvation in broken bread and poured out wine. Now make them shine with hope and look for signs of your Kingdom

Our bodies have been fed with your body. Now refresh them by your Spirit and make us ready to work for your Kingdom in the world.

Our lives this day have been filled with the risen life of Christ; now make us live by faith in the coming of your Kingdom, Amen.

BPW260 'Yours (Thine) be the glory'

Blessing

The blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us all now and always, Amen.