

Ripon and Lower Dales Methodist Circuit

Welcome whenever and wherever you are joining in this act of worship for the Sunday after Easter.

Call

And once again we proclaim -
Christ is risen
He is risen indeed.
Alleluia

And because we know this we can pray
Christ, our risen Lord, no tomb can keep you,
no door is closed to you, no heart barred to
you,
no mind is shut off from you.
Come lead us out of darkness into light,
out of doubt into faith, out of death into light
eternal:
Jesus Christ our risen Lord. Amen

StF 313 Thine be the glory

<https://youtu.be/MygPGz8vm1g>

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:

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:

Edmond Budry (1854-1932) translated by
Richard Birch Hoyle (1875-1939)

*Let us reflect on and affirm what we believe. I
am using, with permission, a passage by
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*If you have a printed copy of this service please
join in with the words in bold.*

Let us lift up our hearts.

.....**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

.....**It is right to give our thanks and
praise.**

It is indeed right to give you our thanks and
praise, O God,
for you have raised Jesus Christ from the dead
and by your grace we have life in his name.

**We give thanks for your risen Son, Jesus,
who shines your light into our darkness,
that the sins of the world might be
forgiven,
and we might live in fellowship with you
and peace with one another,
in one heart and mind.**

From the very beginning, the Word of life was
with you,
creating everything in earth and heaven.
You rescued your people from death
and called them to follow you, walking in the
light.

**You sent your Word of Life into the world,
in your Son, Jesus,
shining your light into our darkness,
that the sins of the world might be
forgiven.**

**Though he was killed by those who walk in
darkness,
you raised him to resurrection life
and now he lives at your side forever,
advocating mercy for all who stumble into
sin.**

**Through his great grace
we are able to live in fellowship with you
and in peace with one another,
in one heart and mind.**

Amen. Thanks be to God

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.
Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are
yours
Now and forever. Amen

StF 297 Christ is alive

<https://youtu.be/Qqaw-VzM7ms>

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

Christ is alive! No longer bound
to distant years in Palestine,
but saving, healing, here and now,
and touching every place and time.

In every insult, rift and war,
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,
and lives, where even hope has died.

Women and men, in age and youth,
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,
and find the way, the life, the truth,
revealed in Jesus, freed for all.

Christ is alive and comes to bring
good news to this and every age,
till earth and sky and ocean ring
with joy, with justice, love, and praise.

Brian Wren (b. 1936)

Talk

As we move through each lectionary year of set readings beginning in Advent, we come to some understanding of God's love shown to us in Jesus.

We celebrate his incarnation,
learn from his teaching,
marvel at his miracles,
enjoy his stories,
grieve at his death,
rejoice in his resurrection,
and finally respond to the gift of the Holy Spirit. Wherever we are in our own faith journey we are invited to identify with those people we read about in the Bible week by week and even when we've heard the stories many times, we find that we can still learn more and take inspiration from them.

Now we come to the weeks between Jesus' resurrection and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost and so we reflect on Jesus' appearances to his disciples and the words he spoke to them.

I often think, as we sing the well-known Easter hymns, that we can forget just how hard it was for those first disciples to come to terms with the fact of the resurrection and what it means. They were traumatized by their grief, by what they had seen, it took time for them to really believe and then to understand. What they witnessed went against everything we might expect following such a painful and public death.

The disciples remembering all that Jesus had shown and taught them took time to understand just what it all meant but most of all it was difficult to accept the actual presence of Jesus among them. But, as they embarked on that journey, the time they spent with the risen Jesus and with each other transformed them.

The same terrified Peter, who had denied Jesus as the cock crowed - at Pentecost, enabled by the Holy Spirit, gave a detailed account of his faith to an enormous crowd. His new understanding came from thinking it through, asking and answering questions.

We are invited to do the same. For whom among us, no matter how long in the tooth in years in the faith, does not still find mysteries, things to think through... to understand?

John 20:19-31

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

²⁸ Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

²⁹ Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

³⁰ Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Talk

So let *us* now enter that room and reflect on what happened to the disciples during those 2 appearances of Jesus 8 days apart. What feelings did they bring to the experience? Let's focus on three of the emotions they were feeling and how their faith was renewed and increased as they moved through those emotions.

Firstly **fear**..... Of course they were afraid... Wouldn't we all be? They had reason to fear. Fear of the world outside the door, of what would happen if they were recognised outside... linked to Jesus.
Fear of being alone and leaderless.
Fear of what was going on inside their heads for Thomas was not the only doubter, they were all unsure to begin with.
Fear confuses us all. It clouds our judgements and governs the way we behave. As we would be in those circumstances, the disciples, too, were confused and subject to both rational and irrational fears.

The second emotion is **peace**. Jesus' first words to the women in the garden was, 'Do not be afraid' and to the disciples behind locked doors, 'Peace be with you'.
It helps doesn't it, when you're very afraid to have someone with you who understands, who will support you through the experience.... someone you can trust.
'Know Jesus, know peace/ no Jesus, no peace we say'.
We've followed Jesus' earthly journey and, in our case particularly during Lent, seen how he met people where they were, understood them, spoke to their needs. Jesus gives peace because he can be trusted to understand, to empathise.
Jesus gives peace because he can be trusted to have the right answers. He explained what things meant; he showed how God wanted us to live with ourselves and others.
Jesus gives peace because he is trustworthy. The disciples were not abandoned in their grief... Jesus returned to prove to them that he had overcome death and then he left them support... the Holy Spirit. He does the same for us.

So, they came through their fear and gained peace... but that was not all. They found that third emotion -**joy**.
In our gospel reading as Jesus met his disciples he breathed his Spirit on to them. This was a foretaste of what was to happen at Pentecost. What do we think is meant by the term 'Christian Joy'? Perhaps looking ahead to Pentecost might help or reflecting on some particularly charismatic Christian that you know.

However we understand it I think we can agree that that word **joy** expresses something quite profound... something bubbling up inside, something which gives certainty and peace even in times of fear.

That joy, we will soon find out at Pentecost, comes from the Spirit of God given by Jesus to all believers.

The Spirit who helps us remember what Jesus did and taught.

The Spirit who helps us, despite our many failings, to grow more like Jesus.

The Spirit who nudges us back in the right direction when we get it wrong

The Spirit who suddenly revealed the truth to Thomas as he fell to his knees and said, 'My Lord and my God'. A moment of pure, brilliant insight and joyful conviction which turned him from doubter to evangelist.

Because of those evangelists what the risen Christ did for the disciples he does for us. Jesus said to Thomas, 'Because you have seen me and believed; blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.' That is us.

So, we find followers of Jesus transformed to be like him, to carry on his work in the world.

When we look at the resurrection appearances, we often get caught up in explaining, rationalizing, especially as Jesus walks through walls and eats fish.

But perhaps any attempt to explain misses the point. The accounts the disciples shared changed peoples' lives. They grasped a community and led it into the future seeing the world in a new way and hoping for a new thing. Where do we find resurrection stories in our own places and communities?

What stories shall we tell of new life, of transformed life, of resurrected life among us? We all know many.

We all know those who have been changed, indeed we all have our own story to share. And so, we have seen that the resurrection requires believers to have to accept and seek to understand, to have open minds to what God is teaching them.

We have seen that this brings about a transformation so that Christ is present in the world not in human form but through and in his believers. We are now remembering that time of transition when the first disciples began to take on that role.

Easter sermons often emphasise the words of Jesus, 'Go and tell' but in these weeks leading to Pentecost the disciples paused and reflected and that changed them so that they not only went and told the good news when the time came but also showed Jesus in their lives. In 'modern speak' they internalized their experience of the resurrection.

We need to remember that there are times when it is more appropriate to simply be still

and learn from God, open to what he has to teach us until our way ahead is clear. Thus, we begin a transformation into the people God wants us to be. Some words from 1 Peter help explain this.

1 Peter 1:3-9 New International Version

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Prayers

Father, Risen Lord, Enabling Spirit, our God, we bring our prayers to you. We may no longer see you and touch you, eat and walk with you as your first disciples did but we can still know and feel you with us in our world today.

We thank you that you are still active in all the situations of our lives, in our joys and sorrows, when we feel secure and when we are afraid, when our faith is strong and when we question and need you to hold us.

We bring our concerns to you now, secure in the knowledge that you already know and care, but offering ourselves to you, asking for comfort and willing to be used by you.

We name those about whom we are personally concerned:
those suffering loss,
through bereavement,
through financial hardship with all the misery that brings,
through loss of self-esteem however caused
and through loneliness.

We look at our planet so often beautiful but so often spoiled by our actions,
by wars, by famine and flood caused by human interference, by nature and by events beyond

our control and understanding.

We are sorry for all we have done whether thoughtlessly or deliberately to make things worse. We ask you to prompt and guide us to be better stewards of your world, better neighbours to all humanity. We thank you that you are always there to give us fresh start.

We bring the concerns of our hearts and lay them at the foot of your cross where you suffered alongside humanity but accomplished so much.
Amen

StF319 Christ Triumphant, Ever Reigning

<https://youtu.be/-i3zVtvakl0>

Christ triumphant, ever reigning,
Saviour, Master, King!
Lord of heaven, our lives sustaining,
hear us as we sing:

Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown, the eternal name!

Word incarnate, truth revealing,
Son of Man on earth!
Power and majesty concealing
by your humble birth:

Suffering servant, scorned, ill-treated,
victim crucified!
Death is through the cross defeated,
sinners justified:

Priestly king, enthroned for ever
high in heaven above!
Sin and death and hell shall never
stifle hymns of love:

So, our hearts and voices raising
through the ages long,
ceaselessly upon you gazing,
this shall be our song:

Michael Seward (b. 1932)

Blessing

May we believe that grace is big enough for us
all,
May we trust grace can hold everything,
May we have faith that grace never runs out,
And may we know that grace is all of God.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and for evermore. Amen

Joan Bailey