

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 31 March 2024 - Easter Day

Lectionary Readings (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Acts 10.34-43 (or Isaiah 25.6-9); Psalm 118.1-2,14-24; 1 Corinthians 15.1-11;

Gospel: John 20.1-18 or Mark 16.1-8 *

**Sermon is based on the Mark reading but could be adapted for the John reading.*

Homily

Today's homily has been written by the Revd Devin McLachlan, Bishop's Interfaith Advisor

Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

What a joy to say, all these centuries on: Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

For centuries, it's been how Christians greet one another at Easter:

'Alleluia, Christ is Risen!'

And they reply, 'He is risen indeed, Alleluia!'

We can practise it now, if you're ready:

Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

[wait or encourage the congregation to reply, 'He is risen indeed, Alleluia!']

You could encourage them to be quite loud, or to repeat it with you three times, getting louder each time. If you have a choir or children in church, you might practice with them before the service]

Today is the victory of Love.

Today is the triumph of Life over Death, the victory of Christ over the Cross.

Today we tell out our Good News: Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

[pause]

But it wasn't such an easy, happy day that first Easter.

Not for Mary Magdalene and the other women at the tomb.

"They were terrified and afraid," the gospel tells us.

Terrified and afraid.

Imagine that first Easter:

It is early in the morning in Jerusalem.

The sun has begun to warm the pale stones of the city walls. It glints off the swords of the Roman army and casts long shadows from the crucifixes which pierce Golgotha.

No one is singing “Jesus Christ is risen today!”

Just the quiet sound of three grieving women on the path to the tomb.

In an upper room, afraid to go out into the street, most of the disciples were frozen by fear and grief. They were terrified by Jesus’ death just three days ago.

No wonder the angel at the tomb had to say to the women: Do not be afraid.

We know from the other gospels, that the women at the tomb overcame their fear.

We know that in time they followed the angel’s instructions:

‘Jesus has been raised...Go, tell his disciples’

In time they faced down their terror, and they shared the Good News:

The tomb was empty. He is Risen indeed!

But like us, these women were simply human.

As the Gospel tells us, at first, they were frightened and amazed.

This Easter Sunday, we are given the same choice:

we can choose Fear, or we can choose Hope.

Fear is far easier.

There is so much fear to choose from.

Fear of change. Fear of violence and terror. Fear of the stranger, the outsider.

Fear that our Christian faith makes us strange, makes us different, makes us vulnerable.

We are told every day, in the doom-scrolling newsfeeds, that we should be afraid.

We could choose fear.

Or, this Easter we can choose hope.

We can choose hope, even under shadow of the cross.

We can choose to listen to the angels, to the good news that the world chooses not to hear: that Love is victorious, that Death has lost its sting.

That Jesus Christ is risen today.

We can choose hope.

And yes, it's a scary story to tell.
It began in such an unlikely way, the story of Jesus:
A saviour born poverty, a refugee in Egypt, a wandering rabbi sleeping rough.

It's a story that looked like it would end on the cross, and continues with empty tomb....
You'll have to come back next Sunday to hear what happens next!

Yes, the story of Jesus Christ is not easy to tell.
But we can choose to tell it. In words, and with our lives.
By showing love. By living without fear. By choosing hope.
Because if we are to make it through this world, we need to choose Hope.

If we chose fear, how can we share the Good News of love with anyone?
But if we choose Hope, then we need not be afraid of Love.

In times like ours, when others abuse religion as a weapon of fear,
we can choose with hope to believe in a great God of Love
 who through death and the cross has opened up a way to Life and Peace.
That is the way of Jesus.
It is a way of Love.

We can choose hope,
 because on that first Easter morning, Hope chose us.
We can choose hope, because Hope chose us.

It is the good news the angels proclaimed at the empty tomb:
Hope chose us.

So be not afraid — rejoice this Easter morning,
 and let yourself be carried away with hope!
Find yourself filled with God's love.
Find yourself breaking bread with outcasts and sinners.
Find yourself chosen by a faith that sees no divisions.
Find yourself surrounded by God's love,
because we all, we *all*, have been chosen by hope.

We all have been chosen by hope.
We all have been chosen by the Risen Lord.

And with the women at the empty tomb,
 with the angels standing beside them,

with generations of the faithful who have gone before us,

we sing out in hopeful voices:

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

[He is Risen indeed, Alleluia!]

Ways to Engage all Generations

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what your favourite part of the Easter story is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder who your favourite character is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder how Mary felt when she saw the empty tomb? I wonder how she felt when the angel said that Jesus had been raised?
- I wonder how you feel about Jesus being raised? I wonder how you feel about Easter?
- I wonder where you are in this story?
- I wonder why the angel said, 'Don't be afraid.'?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?

Suggested intercessions

On this holy day, when Christ was raised from the grave, restoring us to grace, let us pray saying: Christ is Risen, He is Risen indeed!

Risen Lord, Good Shepherd of the sheep, we pray the Church throughout the world, wherever we gather in your name. We pray for Justin, our Archbishop, for Dagmar our bishop, and for *[this parish and]* all of us gathered here this day, that we might have the courage to live and preach the good news of God's love.

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!

Risen Lord, the Prince of Peace, we pray for this nation and for all the nations of the world. We pray for the King and Parliament, and for all in authority.

We pray for all those who speak for justice, and all those who work for peace.

We pray for the people of Ukraine, Israel, Palestine, _____ and all places suffering under war and violence.

And we pray for our local community, that near and far, we all may be gathered in your love and live under your gentle rule:

Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed!

Risen Lord, by whom all things were made, we give thanks for your creation.
We pray for those who work the land and care for the earth;
For the beauty and wonder of nature;
And that we may use aright all that you have given us, that the world may be freed
from poverty, famine, and disaster:
Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed!

Risen Lord, arise with healing in your wings: We pray for all those who suffer in body, mind,
and spirit. For ____ [...and all those on our parish prayer list],
for our own need of healing,
for our NHS and all who care for the ill and vulnerable.
For the lonely, the frail, and all who mourn:
Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed!

Risen Lord, the resurrection and the life,
we give you thanks for all who have lived and believed in you;
[For those in our Year's Mind, including ____] [and especially ____]
And for all those whom we love but see no longer.
That that may have rest in that place where sorrow is no more,
And saints and angels sing out with joy:
Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed!

Suggested hymns/songs

- Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia! [In some hymnals as "Christ the Lord is Risen Today"]
- The day of resurrection!
- Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son
- Alleluia! Sing to Jesus
- Awake, arise! Lift up your voice
- In Christ Alone
- Sing Out An Easter Song
- Because He Lives
- He's Alive
- The Angel Rolled the Stone Away
- Now the green blade rises [but note, it is in a minor key and a bit tricky to sing.]

Activities to accompany the service:

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.org/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@ lectionary resource)