

Haverhill Methodist Church – Worship at Home
Easter Sunday 12th April 2020

Welcome Message – Revd. Peter Goodhall

A very Happy Easter to you and your family.

Easter acclamation:

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

May you be blessed and filled with hope and joy as you join in this act of worship.

Note: The content here differs greatly from our service on screen.

Intersperse hymns and songs as God guides you.

I have made some music suggestions at the end.

We unite with countless Christians around the world and around the Throne to worship our risen Lord and Saviour and to crown him our King.

Read Psalm 118 verses 1-2 and 14-24

Hymn/song

Read Colossians chapter 3 verses 1-4

Let us pray. God our Father, on Easter Day we find that Jesus, who was dead, is alive again.

He lives for ever with you, Lord of time and space,

He lives for ever with us, bringing your life into our life, the Lord of here and now. Lord Jesus we greet you, risen from the dead.

Through Lent and Easter we have in our imagination journeyed with our Master and friend. We thought that your way of love was a dead end, leading only to a cross: Today we see it is the way to life.

We thought that your whole life was wasted:

Today we know it was gloriously worthwhile.

We thought that your suffering was pointless:

Today we can see God's purpose in it.

We thought that death was the end of you.

Today we know that your life was too great to be ended by death.

Lord Jesus we adore you, risen from the dead.

On this day of light and joy, help us to put darkness out of our lives.

On this day of forgiveness and freedom, release us from the power of sin and its guilt. (A time of silent confession)

If we have fallen into despair, if we have failed to hope in you, if we have been afraid of death, if we have forgotten the victory of Christ, Lord forgive us. Lord raise us to new life, resurrection life.

Since life begins again today, help us to make a new beginning with Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Picturing our Lent Cross in church:

We remove from the Lent cross the bag of money.

Jesus has purchased our salvation.

We remove from the Lent cross the towel and the bowl.

Jesus is the servant King.

We remove from the Lent cross the cup of suffering.

Jesus took up our pain and bore our suffering.

We remove from the Lent cross the whip.

By his wounds we are healed.

We remove from the Lent cross the crown of thorns.

Jesus now wears the crown of glory.

We remove from the Lent cross the palm branches.

We lift them high to welcome the risen Lord as King.

We remove from the Lent cross the nails.

Death could not pin him down.

His cross stands empty.

Jesus has been transformed from death to life.

We shall follow where he has led.

From John's gospel, listen to the eyewitness report of that first Easter morning. Significantly for those days and that culture, a woman was the first to meet the risen Lord Jesus.

Read John chapter 20 verses 1-18

Hymn/song

Easter Message

There is a painting called "Check Mate" that depicts a chessboard with a few remaining chess pieces in place. The king is supposedly in checkmate, hence the title of the picture. But one day a master chess player was carefully studying this painting for and finally exclaimed, "It's not true; the painting is wrong.

The king is not in check mate; he has one more move."

This Easter Day we celebrate the truth that Jesus Christ, the King of Kings had one move left. Resurrection. That's Easter and again it defies our expectations. You would expect death to be the end of the game, but not with God. God didn't stop the evil events that led to the cross. He raised Christ from the dead. Easter Day tells us that God can make even the worse defeat a victory.

Now we know, as bleak as things get, God always has one more move left. And what a move it was! He moved the stone!

The gravestone was rolled away and your name is written on it.

John Chapter 20 begins:

"Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance". The mighty stone had lifted out of the groove across the entrance of the tomb. On this glorious Easter Day, in one seismic shift, the stone that rolled along those ancient tramlines that separate life from death and death from life, is jolted and removed. Death is derailed. Death is defeated. Death is destroyed. Likewise, that first Easter would so impact upon those disciples that their lives, their understanding of God would be lifted out of the rut, out of the groove of what they thought was and what was not possible. Nothing would ever be the same again.

But for those first disciples, this new reality only gradually dawned upon them. Their understanding of the empty tomb wasn't immediate. It dawned upon them increasingly, like the night giving way to morning. In John's eyewitness account of the first Easter morning, we find a journey of discovery, a journey of God's revelation, a journey from shadows to substance. This Easter I want to take you on this journey. I want us to see what they saw.

I want us to discover for ourselves this unfolding revelation of the risen Christ. What did they see? From a distance Mary saw the empty tomb and, understandably, concluded that Jesus dead body had been stolen. She ran to tell this shocking news to Simon Peter & John. They raced each other to the tomb. John was the younger and fitter of the two and reached the tomb first He stooped down – we remember that the tombs of this period had a low entrance about 3 to 4 feet high - and John looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Here I want to highlight a significant point. What isn't made clear in our English Bible is how in this passage of scripture, verses 5-8, John employs three different Greek words translated 'look'. These subtle differences are important to our understanding of John's message. They are part of the journey of God's revelation. I want to point them out to you now.

John stoops down and looks in – here John uses the Greek word ‘Blepo’ – it’s a word that refers to our physical **sight** - the everyday kind of looking and seeing – as we see each other and the objects around us now.

John sees with his eyes, but not yet with his heart. He stays outside the tomb. Then Simon Peter, who was behind John, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. This time John uses the Greek word ‘theoreo’ meaning "to **contemplate**, observe, scrutinize". Peter is more than just looking, he is theorising.

He is inside the empty tomb, trying to grasp ‘What has happened here’? The neat, orderly arrangement of the grave clothes showed that this was no grave robbery and that something absolutely unique had happened in that now-empty tomb. Peter sees with his eyes, he thinks with his mind, but, like John, he is yet to understand with his heart. Finally, John finds the courage to also go inside.

He saw and believed. Here John uses the Greek word eido meaning, "to understand, to perceive the significance of". It was a revelation to him - a divine revelation. John believed. This new reality gradually dawned upon him. He’d seen with his eyes, he’d thought with his mind and now he **believed** in his heart that Jesus was alive. John had journeyed from a fearful stooping and squinting from the outside in to a joyful revelation from the inside out.

Likewise Mary turned towards her risen Lord and cried out in recognition - Rabboni! Teacher! Friend, how do you come to the empty tomb on this Easter Day? Do you keep your distance just looking from the outside in? With narrowed vision are you squinting because of the contrast between the morning light and the darkened tomb? Dare you go in? Dare you go in and with Peter contemplate today and in the days and weeks ahead what this all means? And consider what God has done. Consider how if God can lift that mighty stone out of its groove he has the power to lift your life out of the rut and – with Mary -open you to a new encounter with our living Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?

She went from thinking Jesus was the gardener to knowing he was her Master and her true love. This Easter will you nod to the gardener or embrace your Saviour? God wants to open your eyes, your mind, your heart to his risen presence, a greater revelation, a deeper love for God.

To say with the poet: “My master was so very poor they nailed him to a cross. So very rich my master was He gave his all and knew no loss. He was better to me than all my hopes, he was better than all my fears. He made me a bridge of my broken works and a rainbow of my tears”.

Today may we understand the lengths that He was prepared to go for all mankind that we might have life in all its fullness, life in eternity.

That we may know the love of our heavenly Father deep in our hearts and share the message of Easter Sunday in our Good Friday world. It is his revelation to us his hesitant and frightened disciples. We go into the tomb. We enter into the Easter mystery.

Then we must turn and leave – to embrace new life!

There’s no point hanging around. Look in the tomb but then go and go quickly – there’s work to be done!”

With Lazarus, with Christ, we exchange our tomb life for New Life.

Don’t hold on to the past! Let it go! Don’t grieve at an empty grave!

Move on! Go and tell! There is more to discover! Through revelation and revolution in hearts and souls, in our walk to the cross and beyond he will roll the stone away, he will show us the empty tomb, he will show us our risen Saviour, he will show us his next move.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Hymn/song

Prayers for Others

Think of a cross, decorated with flowers.

You may have created one you can look at as a focus for prayer.

Name people and places under each heading as the Holy Spirit leads you:

Life-giving God, transform your Church...

Life-giving God, transform your world...

Life-giving God, transform all human suffering...

Life-giving God, transform our lives...

Creator God, we thank you for the precious gift of new life; may we never again take it for granted, but live each moment in the fullness of life that Jesus has gained for us. Amen.

Unite your prayers with the whole church as you pray

The Lord’s Prayer. ‘Our Father...’

Hymn/song

The Blessing

We offer our lives and our gifts to the Lord.
Resurrecting God,
you conquered death
and opened the gates of life everlasting.
In the power of the Holy Spirit,
raise us with Christ
that we, too, may proclaim
healing and peace to the nations. Amen.
Remain with hope; the risen Lord goes before you.
Remain at peace; the risen Lord goes with you.
Remain in love, the risen Lord lives within you.
May his blessing rest on you and all you remember this Easter and
forevermore. Amen.

Coffee Time Conversation

- What are you feeling as you come to the empty tomb this Easter? Take it to the Lord in prayer.
- Is your life in any rut or routine where you need the stone to be moved? Ask the Lord to move powerfully in your life.
- Name signs of new life and new hope today.
Thank God for them.

Suggested Hymns and Songs of Resurrection

More Traditional Music:

Thine be the glory

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRWhIKcJw9U>

Christ the Lord is risen today

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GQO2NCrIm8>

Crown him with many crowns

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7OCs0d_4vM

All I once I held dear, built my life upon (Philippians 3:7-11)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxpPla-BskY>

More Contemporary Music:

See what a morning

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Qlc0UIRkBk>

Lord I lift your name on high

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EH--np6PT5Y>

O praise the name (I cast my mind to Calvary)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1mHJYjFUx4>

In Christ alone (Virtual Choir – A Cappella)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RY4CW5pte98>

And Finally....

*Tomb, thou shalt not hold Him longer;
Death is strong, but Life is stronger;
Stronger than the dark, the light;
Stronger than the wrong, the right;
Faith and Hope triumphant say,
Christ will rise on Easter Day.*

By Phillips Brooks

Keep socially isolated.

Keep safe.

Keep communicating.

God bless you and keep you until we meet again.

My prayers are with you.

Happy Easter!

With love from our family to yours,

Peter



Our Easter Cross 2018
Our Easter Cross 2021