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## Service for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter, 11<sup>th</sup> April 2021 Low Sunday

*A warm welcome to all who share in worship with us today.*

### CALL TO WORSHIP

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. By His great mercy, He has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you.

So we bring our praise today in the words of our first hymn...

HYMN: The day of resurrection

*If you would like to sing this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

1 The day of resurrection!  
Earth, tell it out abroad;  
the Passover of gladness,  
the Passover of God.  
From death to life eternal,  
from earth unto the sky,  
our Christ hath brought us over,  
with hymns of victory.

2 Our hearts be pure from evil,  
that we may see aright  
the Lord in rays eternal  
of resurrection light;  
and listening to his accents,  
may hear, so calm and plain,  
his own "All hail!" and, hearing,  
may raise the victor strain.

3 Now let the heavens be joyful!  
Let earth the song begin!  
Let the round world keep triumph,  
and all that is therein!  
Let all things seen and unseen  
their notes in gladness blend,  
for Christ the Lord hath risen,  
our joy that hath no end.

*St John of Damascus*

### PRAYER

*Let us pray*

Christ our Lord, risen from the dead, come and enter into the darkness of our doubt and despair with the bright light of your presence; that we may put our trust in you and in the power of your resurrection. May we rejoice in you, the risen Lord and our Saviour.

Loving God, we thank you for your creation and for all the signs of spring, reminding us of your renewing work in the world around us.

We thank you for your mightiest act in raising Jesus from the dead.

We thank you that He has overcome sin and death for us and brought us life and hope.

We thank you for all your faithful people, whose lives have revealed your transforming power. We praise your Holy Name and rejoice in your wonderful deeds.

God, our loving Father, we are sorry for the times when we have doubted your power and fallen into despair; when we have locked the doors of our lives in fear; when we have failed to put our trust in you and have lost confidence in your never failing love.

Remind us, we pray, that nothing can separate us from your love, and that you are always with us in every experience of life.

Grant us your forgiveness and your peace, through Jesus Christ, our Lord,

**Amen.**

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name;**

**Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread.**

**And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.**

**For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.**

**Amen.**

#### SCRIPTURE READINGS

Acts 4: 32-35

<sup>32</sup>The group of believers was one in mind and heart. None of them said that any of their belongings were their own, but they all shared with one another everything they had.

<sup>33</sup>With great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God poured rich blessings on them all. <sup>34</sup>There was no one in the group who was in need. Those who owned fields or houses would sell them, bring the money received from the sale, <sup>35</sup>and turn it over to the apostles; and the money was distributed according to the needs of the people.

St John 20: 19-31

<sup>19</sup>It was late that Sunday evening, and the disciples were gathered together behind locked doors, because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities. Then Jesus came and stood among them. "Peace be with you," he said. <sup>20</sup>After saying this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy at seeing the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you." <sup>22</sup>Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup>If you forgive people's sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

<sup>24</sup>One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (called the Twin), was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup>So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

Thomas said to them, "Unless I see the scars of the nails in his hands and put my finger on those scars and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

<sup>26</sup>A week later the disciples were together again indoors, and Thomas was with them. The doors were locked, but Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

<sup>27</sup>Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and look at my hands; then reach out your hand and put it in my side. Stop your doubting, and believe!"

<sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, "Do you believe because you see me? How happy are those who believe without seeing me!"

<sup>30</sup> In his disciples' presence Jesus performed many other miracles which are not written down in this book. <sup>31</sup> But these have been written in order that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through your faith in him you may have life.

HYMN: Jesus, Lord, Redeemer

*If you would like to sing this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

1 Jesus, Lord, Redeemer,  
once for sinners slain,  
crucified in weakness,  
raised in pow'r to reign,  
dwelling with the Father,  
endless in your days,  
unto you be glory,  
honour, blessing, praise.

2 Faithful ones, communing  
toward the close of day,  
desolate and weary,  
met you in the way.  
So, when sun is setting,  
come to us and show  
all the truth; and in us  
make our hearts to glow.

3 In the upper chamber,  
where the ten in fear  
gathered sad and troubled,  
there you did appear.  
Present with us now, Lord,  
bid our sorrows cease;  
breathing on us, Saviour,  
say, "I give you peace."

*Patrick M Kirkland*

ADDRESS: *Mrs Nancy McOnie*

Phrases such as "Do not hold on to me" and "Behind locked doors" have brought the Easter stories very much up-to-date for me this year.

They are experiences we have all shared over these past months, although for different reasons. Last Sunday's story of Mary meeting Jesus in the garden on Easter morning reminded us of her longing to give Jesus a hug; but she had to learn to love Him through faith, even when she could no longer see or touch Him.

It was late that Sunday evening when we hear that Jesus came to all of the disciples, with the exception of Thomas. They were behind locked doors for fear of the Jews, not Covid; but I feel I can read that story with new understanding of their situation.

However, locked doors no longer kept Jesus out. Suddenly, He was there with them. He spoke the familiar greeting "Peace be with you". I am sure they would have remembered His promise of peace as the gift to them at the Last Supper.

We are told that they were filled with joy when they saw the Lord. Doors no longer kept Him out: He was there with them again.

Even though we have not been able to share together in fellowship, I am sure many of you will have felt the presence of Jesus with you in your own homes in these past months. Sometimes the words of a hymn have come into my mind - or a favourite Bible passage – and I have known that He is near.

As Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote in one of his poems:

I greet Him the days I meet Him, and bless when I understand.

However, Thomas was not with the other disciples on that first visit. When he was told that Jesus had been there with them, he refused to believe. “Unless I see the print of the nail in His hands and put my hand on the scar in His side, I will not believe”, he said.

But Jesus came to help him find a new faith. A week later, He met them again in the same room when Thomas was there. He showed Thomas the scars and invited him to touch them. The artist Caravaggio has painted a rather gruesome picture of Thomas touching the hole in the side of Jesus, but actually the Bible account does not say that Thomas did so. He *saw* and believed; believed not only that Jesus was alive, but that He was indeed both Lord and God. That was a great step of faith.

The experiences of the disciples on their journey of faith are not unlike our own experiences on our faith journeys today. Like them, we are often afraid and disheartened. We do not trust the witness or claims of others and our journey can be full of ups and downs. One thing Thomas can do for us is to help us to accept that we can have doubts, but that also we can find reassurance in the knowledge that He, the risen Lord, can be with us as He was with Thomas.

The one thing that stands out for me in the Thomas story is the emphasis he laid on wanting to see the scars of the suffering Jesus had experienced. To Thomas, they were a proof of Jesus’ identity, as William Temple said in his commentary. This was the body that hung on the cross and was laid in the tomb. William Temple wrote: “The wounds of Christ are His credentials in the suffering race of men; only a God in whose perfect being pain has its place can win and hold our worship.” He quoted a poem by Edwards Shillito, also used by George Appleton in his book *Hour of Glory*, which I share with you now...

*Jesus of the Scars* by Edward Shillito

If we have never sought, we seek Thee now;  
Thine eyes burn through the dark, our only stars;  
We must have sight of thorn-pricks on Thy brow,  
We must have Thee, O Jesus of the Scars.

The heavens frighten us; they are too calm;  
In all the universe we have no place.  
Our wounds are hurting us; where is the balm?  
Lord Jesus, by Thy Scars, we claim Thy grace.

If, when the doors are shut, Thou drawest near,  
Only reveal those hands, that side of Thine;  
We know to-day what wounds are, have no fear,  
Show us Thy Scars, we know the countersign.

The other gods were strong; but Thou wast weak;  
They rode, but Thou didst stumble to a throne;  
But to our wounds only God's wounds can speak,  
And not a god has wounds, but Thou alone.

Jesus showed us the God who has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. This past year has shown us how true that is in all the love and care that has been shown to so many people suffering and mourning at this time.

One more thought to share with you from this reading is the verse about the Holy Spirit: "He breathed on them and said 'Receive the Holy Spirit' ".

Jesus needed the disciples to carry on His work, but he knew that they would need the power of the Holy Spirit to enable them in their mission. Is this John's description of Pentecost, I wonder? Certainly, by the time this gospel was written, it would have become a part of the disciples' experience.

The need for forgiveness is an important reminder to all of us to forgive one another and love one another. In this passage, Jesus deals with fears and doubts and suffering, and prepares the disciples for the work He wants them to accomplish in the years ahead. They are just as relevant for us today in the experiences we face, so I close with some of the words I used in my Call to Worship...

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. By His great mercy, we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead... Without having seen Him, you love Him. Though you do not see Him, you believe in Him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy. As the outcome of your faith, you obtain salvation of your souls."

For this, we say 'Thanks be to God'. Amen.

#### PRAYERS of intercession

*Let us pray*

Blessed are you, Lord God of our salvation! To you be praise and glory for ever.

Lord, we give you thanks for the light of the Gospel and that it shines in our hearts. We pray today for all who are struggling with their faith, those who doubt and any who sit in darkness or who live in fear.

Lord God, you are light: **in you is no darkness at all.**

We remember and pray for all the people and nations of our world and ask your blessing on all who suffer from poverty or oppression.

We pray for any who are separated from their loved ones and their homes.

We remember all who are in prison.

Lord God, you are light: **in you is no darkness at all.**

We give thanks that you lived in an ordinary home, Lord. We pray that your presence and peace may be known in our own homes and amongst our loved ones.

We pray for homes where faith is mocked and Christians are persecuted, and we hold in our thoughts all who are struggling to remain faithful, particularly in the times of lockdown.

Lord God, you are light: **in you is no darkness at all.**

We pray for all who are ill at this time, all who are lonely and facing a time of crisis. May they know your presence and your peace.

We pray for our own homes and those whom we love, and for all the members & friends of Broadway Church.

We look forward to the time when we can all worship together in church again.

Father, we come with confidence and pray for friends and loved ones departed. May they know the fullness of joy in your presence and in eternal life.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ,  
**Amen.**

HYMN: Jesus lives

*If you would like to **sing** this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

1 Jesus lives! Thy terrors now  
Can, O death, no more appal us;  
Jesus lives! By this we know  
Thou, O grave, canst not enthral us.  
Alleluia!

Jesus lives! For us he died;  
Hence may we, to Jesus living,  
Pure in heart may we abide,  
Praise to him and glory giving:  
Alleluia!

3 Jesus lives! Our hearts know well  
Naught from us his love shall sever;  
Life, nor death, nor powers of hell  
Part us now from Christ for ever.  
Alleluia!

4 Jesus lives! Henceforth is death  
Entrance gate to life immortal;  
This shall calm our trembling breath  
When we pass its gloomy portal.  
Alleluia!

5 Jesus lives! To him the throne  
Over all the world is given:  
May we go where he is gone,  
Live and reign with him in heaven.  
Alleluia!

*C F Gellert*

**BLESSING**

May you find in the risen Lord the way to fullness of life, the way of joy and peace;  
and may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, rest upon us  
and abide with us and with all whom we love, this day and for evermore.

**Amen.**