

Our song to sing or to read: Yours Be The Glory (TiS 380)

Yours be the glory, risen, conquering Son
Endless is the victory over death you've won
Angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away
Kept the folded graveclothes, where your body lay

*Refrain: Yours be the glory, risen, conquering Son
Endless is the victory over death you've won*

See, 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 the Lord is living, death has lost its sting ... *Refrain*

No more we doubt you, glorious Prince of life
Life is naught without you: aid us in our strife
Make us more than conquerors through your deathless love
Bring us safe through Jordan to your home above ... *Refrain*

A blessing

The peace of God which passes all understanding
Keep our hearts and minds
In the knowledge and love of God
And His son, Jesus Christ our Lord
And the blessing of God almighty
The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
Be amongst you and remain with you always.
Amen



Church in a Bag
12 April 2020
Easter Sunday

Dubbo Uniting Church



Call to worship

People of God, why do you seek the living among the dead?

Because we are uncertain, we are not comfortable, we have doubts and fears.

Do not be afraid, for he has risen from the dead. He has broken the tomb of death. He is here among us now. So why do you seek the living among the dead?

Because we feel guilty, we feel lonely, we fear for the human race because we continue to desert Him and betray Him.

Do not carry those burdens any longer, for he has taken our sin and guilt upon himself, lifted them from us by his Cross. People of God, why do you seek the living among the dead?

Because our wounds are deep, we have not trusted him, we have turned away from him and from our neighbours.

Do not dwell on your wounds for he has risen to heal you, to forgive you. He has risen to change our pain into joy, to bind us together, to teach us about love. People of God, Christ is Risen! Hallelujah!

Hallelujah! Christ is risen indeed! Let us worship him.

Our song to sing or to read: Christ the Lord is risen today (TiS 365)

Christ the Lord is risen today – alleluia!
Our triumphant holy day – alleluia!
Who so lately on the cross – alleluia!
Suffered to redeem our loss – alleluia!

Continued over ...



Hymns of praise then let us sing – alleluia!
Unto Christ, our heavenly king – alleluia!
Who endured the cross and grave – alleluia!
Sinners to redeem and save – alleluia!

But the pain that he endured – alleluia!
Our salvation has procured – alleluia!
Now exalted he is king – alleluia!
And the angels ever sing – alleluia!

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Prayer of preparation

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen

Prayer of confession

Almighty and most merciful Father. We have erred and strayed from your ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts.

Lord have mercy

We have offended against your holy laws and left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us.

Lord have mercy

Spare us, O God, as we confess our faults. Restore to us that are penitent; according to your promises declared unto mankind in Christ.

Lord have mercy

And grant, O merciful Father, for his sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous and sober life, to the glory of the Holy Name.

Hear the good news: Christ died for us while we were yet sinners; that proves God's love toward us. In the words of Jesus, we accept that we are forgiven. We are forgiven

Thanks be to God.

Declaration of faith

We are not alone, we live in God's World.
We believe in God:
who has created and is creating
who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh
to reconcile and make new
who works in us and others by the Spirit.
We trust in God.
We are called to be the Church.
To celebrate God's presence
to love and serve others
to seek justice and resist evil
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen
our judge and our hope.
In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us.
We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

Prayer

Blessed Jesus, Master and Lord, from that Cross you looked forward to the joyful welcome of your Father's Kingdom. Your love of life is now fulfilled, and yet your ministry of grace continues in your Father's house, raising us up when we are cast down, encouraging us when our strength is low, bringing light when our vision is dimmed. As we face this time in our Nation's and World's struggle, inspire in us this message of confidence and trust in your conquering and overcoming, even death. Lord, our knowledge now is partial, but Jesus has shown us that his love and peace surrounds us, and we glorify our Lord.

The 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 for ever. Amen.

Poor Mary Magdalene! If ever there was one whose devotion deserved the reward of hearing the joyous, triumphant message of this Easter morning, it was surely this hopeless one named Mary Magdalene. But we read she turned back and saw Jesus but did not know him. Poor Mary.

After this she entered the empty tomb, there to encounter with two angels, and heard their joyous message. She must have come out numbed and confused, so that when she turned and saw Jesus, she supposed him to be a gardener.

It is generally believed that Mary was the one whom Jesus had lifted and drawn from a life on the street. One who had seen in the eyes of Jesus, something she had never seen in a man's eyes before – a real concern, compassion, forgiveness, peace and trust. Such an influence that she transformed to become a new woman in response to that encounter.

Mary had been at the foot of the cross. She had helped lay his broken, dead body in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Now before the sun was up, she had returned to the tomb to complete the task of embalming the lifeless body. And this is what she found – a troop of Roman Soldiers, fearful at what possible explanation they would be able to give their superiors about discovering that great big stone used to seal the tomb was now rolled away and the tomb empty.



And what of the linen cloths lying on the stone ledge, draped there as though the body laid once there had evaporated out of them. And the angels, and the very confused Mary. So much so that 'she knew Him not'.

Bible reading: John 20:1-18

Reflection

Think, then, upon the message that is here for us on this very special morning.

Mary was seeking a dead Christ – not a living one and so she couldn't find him. For Jesus was not dead but alive "Death is swallowed up in victory". "Why seek the living among the dead?", the angels have said.

What many followers of Jesus expected was to find the dead body with nail pierced hands and feet – and when the clamour of the event had quietened down, they could make some appropriate inscription telling how a good man lived and died a fearful, unjust death. But...but, Jesus is alive, not to be found in a dank tomb in Israel. Our cross is empty of a dying or dead corpse!

Interesting that it was written later that a soldier at the cross who, when asked what was happening, stated that Jesus "was loose in the world". Indeed.

There is a second thought to ponder. For all her searching, it was that it was not Mary Magdalene who found Jesus at the tomb, it was Jesus who called to Mary and found her. He found her weeping and confused; grief stricken very much like she had been when he had first spoken to her months before. It is Jesus who speaks "Mary" and the light dawns only gradually to who stands before her. Maybe she would have thought, "He has found me again".



And that is the whole story of the Gospel...that God is always seeking us...not only when and if we are seeking him. But even when we are alienated from him, and do not miss him; when we are rebellious and set in our wilful, unworthy ways, HE comes and finds us.

Francis Thomson has written these wonderful words:

“I fled Him, down the nights and down the days
I fled Him, down the arches of the years
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of mine own mind, and in the midst of tears
I hid from him, and under running laughter.”



Later in this moving poem, Thompson tells how it is God who comes to him, living under cardboard beneath London Bridge, a wreck. God...finds...him. The Apostle Paul would know this firsthand, found as he was on the Damascus Road. In Galatians, Paul corrects his initial statement that ‘they know God’, realising that is wrong, and in truth it is that God knows you. So, take this in: God does not give up in his search for us. He will seek until he finds.

Mary, who is seeking herself, has to be found. Jesus calls, “Mary”. He is calling your name too.

The third message for us to ponder this Easter morning is in Mary’s failure to recognise who stands before her. We so often fail to recognise when it is God, Christ, who comes into our lives. Have you supposed him to be a friend, a neighbour, a stranger on the street? Do you remember in the Gospels the record of how Jesus told that it was he who had come to them as someone in need and they did not know him?

G.K. Chesterton tells a story about Francis of Assisi who had a terror of Leprosy. One day he met unexpectedly a leper and immediately recoiled. But, being ashamed, he put his arms around the leper, gave him food and money and wished him well. As he walked away he turned to look back and wave, but there was only an empty road before him. For Francis, there is the conviction that it was Christ whom he had encountered and performed that act of love as Jesus had instructed over a thousand years before.

So, here we are again on a glorious Easter morning and the message of that first Easter comes to us again. Despite our situation of social distancing, we are joining with our brothers and sisters in Christ in our likely private participation of worship. The presence of the Risen Saviour is with each one of us. He IS seeking us. He IS alive.

In the name of Father, Son and the Holy Ghost.
Amen

The Word proclaimed

“She turned herself back and beheld Jesus standing - supposing him to be a gardener and knew not that it was Jesus”. John 20:14

