

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Welcome to worship. We may be apart but actually we are united in the risen Christ.

Let us come before him now in stillness. (Take time to experience him, risen among us.)

We celebrate the risen Christ who comes to be near to us.

Hymn S the F 297. 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.

2. Christ is alive! No longer bound to distant lands in Palestine,

But saving, healing, here and now, and touching every place and time.

3. In every insult, rift and war, where colour, scorn or wealth divide,

Christ suffers still, yet loves the more, and lives, where every hope has died.

4. 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.

5. 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.

Prayers:

Approach: Awaken us Lord to your light, open our eyes to your presence.

Awaken us Lord to your love, open our hearts to your indwelling.

Awaken us Lord to your life, open our minds to your abiding.

Awaken us Lord to your purpose, open our will to your guiding.

Confession: Lord we realise that we have been selfish, thinking of ourselves during these challenging times and not always conscious of the needs and challenges others are facing. As we begin to see a return to more normal living help us to be more concerned for others who are struggling at this time.

Thanksgiving: Thank you Lord for your presence with us. Thank you Lord for your upholding and embracing love. Thank you Lord that you hold our hand and lead us in paths of righteousness. AMEN

Reading: John 20 vs. 19-23

Hymn: S the F 293. All heaven declares the glory of the risen Lord; who can compare with the beauty of the Lord? For ever he will be the Lamb up on the throne; I gladly bow the knee and worship him alone.

2. I will proclaim the glory of the risen Lord, who once was slain to reconcile us to God. For ever you will be the Lamb up on the throne; I gladly bow the knee and worship you alone.

Talk 1

How do we think the disciples were feeling on that first Easter Sunday? They had left everything to follow Jesus and saw him as God's special one who would lead them into freedom. SUDDENLY he is gone, and in the worst possible way. Their scripture says that 'cursed is he who is hanged on a tree'. From everything being right and they were safe with Jesus, all is lost.

Some of us may have experienced a sense of loss where a love done has died and we have not had the chance to really say goodbye. For the rest of us try to remember when something happened and everything changed. Some years ago, I was headhunted for a job in London. All went swimmingly for two months. Every day when I was not out on business I went to lunch with the M D and three colleagues. Then one day I saw the M D leaving for head office. He never returned! It took about 18 months to move on from that situation..

The risen Jesus may have appeared to Mary and the other women. However, the witness of women in that society was regarded as unreliable. We note that the doors were locked for safety. These men were scared. Not only had they lost everything in Jesus' death, but they must have felt very vulnerable. SUDDENLY all changed. Jesus was back! It must have been how I would have felt if my boss had walked in the next morning multiplied many times over. Jesus offers peace – the inner Jesus peace of shalom.

John then tells us that Jesus breathed on them and they receive the Holy Spirit. We are much more familiar with the Luke version in Acts at Pentecost. That is very dramatic and the Spirit certainly comes like that sometimes. However, coming quietly is also true. The Spirit does come to each of us as we accept the crucified and risen Lord. That may be dynamically or gently.

Finally, Jesus is giving the disciples authority to forgive sins. Actually, this may be about discernment; In other words the gift of knowing when people are truly sorry.

Reading: John 20 vs. 24-31

Hymn: S the F 313. 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.*

2. 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 hast lost its sting; *Chorus.*

3. No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of Life; life is nought without thee; aid us in our strife; bring us safe through Jordan to thy home above; *Chorus.*

Talk 2

Where was Thomas? We do not know. What we do know is he missed seeing Jesus! His response to his fellow disciples has earned him the title 'Doubting Thomas'.

Have you ever missed something you were going to go to? Perhaps you were unwell or something came up to prevent you going. So we might try to imagine how Thomas felt. Did he feel angry or unworthy? Thomas is right to want to experience Jesus himself. There are no secondhanded Christians or inherited faith. We need to respond to Jesus personally. We are saved individually into a fellowship of believers. There is nothing doubting about, 'My Lord and my God'!

Thomas is invited to feel the prints. Jesus' resurrection is real – physical. Nothing less will do to say he is risen. So Jesus is the first born of the new creation and goes before us to show the way.

Prayers:

Intercessions:

In this time of easing of restrictions, we pray that the new advice will be followed to keep case numbers and hospital admissions under control. We pray for reopening of non-essential retail outlets and particularly those in Dorchester for their recovery.

Thank you for the role out programme of vaccinations, may this prove continually effective in controlling cases.

We pray for nations less well prepared than ourselves in coping with a pandemic, that they will receive the help and support they need.

Petition:

As opportunities arise to begin to return to worshipping together in church may we regain the confidence to come together and share real fellowship.

Hymn: S the F: 303. I know that my Redeemer lives – what joy the blest assurance gives! He lives, he lives who once was dead; he lives my everlasting Head!

2. He lives to bless me with his love; he lives, to plead for me above; he lives, my hungry soul to feed; he lives to help in times of need.

3. He lives and grants me daily breath; he lives, and I shall conquer death; he lives my mansion to prepare; he lives, to lead me safely there.

4. He lives, all glory to his name; he lives, my Saviour still the same; what joy the blest assurance gives, I know that my Redeemer lives!

Close: The blessing of the Father who made us, the blessing of the Son who died for us, the blessing of the Spirit who accompanies us be up on us now and in the coming days. AMEN

Approach prayer by David Adam.