**EASTER SUNDAY SERVICE 2020**

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 ST MICHAEL’S CHURCH HOOLE

**Jesus is alive!**

**‘*He is not here; He has risen, just as He said’. Matthew 28 v 6***

**Today is Easter Day. Today we are celebrating the central truth of the Christian Faith -Jesus Has Risen from the dead; through His death on the cross He has conquered sin and Death. A new era has dawned; Life can never be the same again. Come and see ….**

**EASTER GREETING**:

 We are risen with Christ

 **The Lord is risen**

 Eternal life is ours

 **The Lord is risen**

 Death has met its master

 **The Lord is risen**

 The way to heaven is open

 **The Lord is risen**

 He is risen indeed

 **Alleluia! Amen**

Our first hymn is a great Easter hymn: ***Jesus Christ is Risen today*** https://youtu.be/qBNamFYN\_6E

Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia,
our triumphant holy day; alleluia,
who did once upon the cross; alleluia,
suffer to redeem our loss; alleluia!

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 pains which he endured; Alleluia,
our salvation have procured; alleluia,
now above the sky he's King; alleluia,
where the angels ever sing: alleluia!

**Let us pray:**

**EASTER SUNDAY PRAYER**

**Lord of all life and power, who through the mighty resurrection of your Son**

**overcame the old order of sin and death to make all things new in him:**

**grant that we, being dead to sin and alive to you in Jesus Christ,**

**may reign with him in glory; to whom with you and the Holy Spirit**

**be praise and honour, glory and might, now and in all eternity. Amen.**

**Bible READING:**

**Matthew 28: v 1-10.**

**Jesus has risen**

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: “He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.” Now I have told you.’

So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. ‘Greetings,’ he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.’

**SERMON**

**Jesus is Alive**

Let us pray:

Risen Lord, speak to us now in our confusion and fear. And transform our lives for ever with resurrection joy. Amen

No-one will ever forget Lockdown. Our grandchildren are all keeping Lockdown diaries which I am sure they will want to show to their own children. Our life now is History in the making. And we know when it’s all over that the world will be a different world. There will be no ‘getting back to normal’ - things have changed irrevocably. Our social, our political, our financial landscapes – the whole of our lives- can never be the same again.

As we wrestle with that disturbing truth, it is Easter morning. Jesus, the One who was crucified, dead and buried is not in the tomb. The tomb is empty. The women - ever practical in handling their grief - had set off to anoint the body. Their world had been shattered but instead of remaining in their self-imposed lockdown despite their fear of the authorities, they decided that they had to do something. They got as we heard much more than they bargained. Matthew’s account of the first Easter Day is much the most dramatic of the 4 Gospels: an earthquake, an angel, the guards unconscious ....and then the earth shattering news that Jesus is not there. He has been raised from the dead just as He said He would be. Matthew is making it crystal clear that God is at work here, supernaturally; He is starting something completely new; the world can never be the same again. A new era is beginning and the women were the ones who were to begin the great task of telling others that Jesus is alive and everything has changed.

Look for a moment at the women's reaction to the Angel's message; afraid yet filled with joy – a mixture of terror and delight. Just as you would be. Faced with the evidence of an empty tomb, of a corpse vanishing, who would not be frightened? And make no mistake the evidence of the empty tomb is solid; those who spend time studying the evidence often end up with an unshakeable conviction that the Resurrection of Jesus is true, that no human explanation satisfactorily explains why the tomb was empty that first Easter morning. If there was still a corpse the authorities would have produced it. If the disciples had known where the body was they would not have given their lives insisting Jesus had risen. If Jesus was not alive and real to his followers then the Christian Church would never have grown exponentially so fast until today a third of the world, over 3 billion people, claim He lives.

The evidence for the resurrection is compelling but of itself leads only to intellectual conviction and perhaps fear. These 2 women, the 2 Marys were understandably fearful – they had just witnessed astonishing supernatural activity. But then they were overcome with joy as they met the Risen Jesus. They then knew not just intellectually but emotionally too with the whole of their being that Jesus was truly alive. Their reaction was the first one for all of us- Worship. There can be no other response to a person meeting his Lord, his Saviour and his King.

So for us on this Easter Day our starting point must be worship. Let us worship Jesus, the one who has ‘burst from the tomb’ as our last hymn puts it, who has broken out of what we thought was the most impregnable Lockdown in the Universe -Death itself. Let us Worship Him who has triumphed over death itself, who has given up His life for us, who loves us more than we can begin to imagine and who longs for us to serve Him with every fibre of our being. Let us thank and praise Him for His death on a cross for us and for His presence and His peace with us day by day. Let’s acknowledge our failure to love Him with our heart mind and strength and recommit ourselves to serve Him.

 And having worshipped in thanksgiving and joy let us then turn to the great task of sharing the good news of Jesus’ resurrection with others. There is a pattern running through the gospels here. Jesus first tells us as He told 2 of his disciples at the beginning: “Come and see". Then as with them and the women at the tomb so with us He says “Go and tell”.

Lockdown gives us opportunities to tell and share the Good News that we had never dreamed of. The whole of the virtual world which is central to the lives of our younger generation has just become much more significant in the lives of so many more in our society, as Zoom and other platforms make it possible for families to remain connected to one another and all of us to remain in contact with the outside world. At St Michael's we have already made contact with many new folk, some of whom I hope are joining in this virtual service. As we rejoice at these new friendships and opportunities let us all take advantage of them to share the best news there could ever be to those living in the very real fear of illness and death of themselves and their loved one. Everyone needs to know. Jesus is Risen.

Death is conquered. We can really rejoice on this Easter Day. There is new creation, new life. There will not only be life, albeit a different life after lockdown, there is new life , eternal life to be had now in a relationship with Jesus Christ. He is alive. HE IS RISEN. ALLELUIA!

Let us pray:

So Lord Jesus, Risen Lord we come to you now. Forgive us for our failure to recognise you as Lord. Thank you that you have turned the darkness of death into the dawn of new life. So may we experience your risen power and presence in our daily lives now and share that joy with others.

 Our next hymn focuses on the fact that it is In Christ alone we can find love, forgiveness, light and hope. ***In Christ Alone our Hope is found https://youtu.be/RzDOVsJeq3Y***

In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease
My Comforter, my All in All
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost…

**Prayers**

1) Lord, at this time of world-wide crisis, we praise you for your love for the world that you created. We praise you for your offer to all people, races, tribes and nations of resurrection life. And we thank you for the Resurrection of your Son, paving the way for us into your Presence. We pray for all those countries particularly smitten by the coronavirus, and we ask for your protection, your healing and your sustaining power.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

2) Father, at this time of national crisis, we commit our country into your Hands. We thank you for the hard work and sacrifice of all those working in the NHS and the caring professions, and all those involved in seeking to find a solution to and a way through this present difficulty. And we thank you for the Resurrection of your Son, winning victory over sin and the grave. We ask that we, being risen with Him, may set our affection on things above, not on things of the earth; that when He who is our life appears, we may also appear with Him in glory.

Lord, in your mercy, our prayer.

3) Father, at this time of crisis for our communities and our families, we again praise you for the Resurrection of your Son. Though "locked down" in the grave on Easter Saturday, He "burst forth in glorious day, rising up from the grave". Help us in both our family life and community life, to experience that resurrection joy. And give us that peace, we pray, that your Risen Son bestowed on the disciples, on that first Easter Sunday evening.

All these prayers we offer up in the Name of, in the Power of, and for the Glory of your Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We join now in the prayer Jesus taught his followers to pray:

**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**

Our final hymn focuses on the glory of Jesus’ Resurrection; ***Thine Be the Glory, Risen Conquering Son https://youtu.be/lXzmjNE-yLA***

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.
*Refrain:
Thine be the glory, risen conquering Son,
Endless is the vict'ry, thou o'er death hast won.*

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 hath lost its sting.
*Refrain:
Thine be the glory, risen conquering Son,
Endless is the vict'ry, thou o'er death hast won.*

No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of life;
life is naught without thee; aid us in our strife;
make us more than conquerors, through thy deathless love:
bring us safe through Jordan to thy home above.
*Refrain:
Thine be the glory, risen conquering Son,
Endless is the vict'ry, thou o'er death hast won.*

**BLESSING**

May the Love of the Risen Lord Jesus draw you to Himself

May the Power of the Risen Lord Jesus strengthen you to serve Him

And may the Joy of the Risen Lord Jesus fill your hearts this Eastertide.

 And so may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and all those whom you love, now and for ever more. Amen

***Hallelujah chorus: Handel https://youtu.be/A9v7vYuZSAU***

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