

20th April, 2025

The paper-version Service



To Begin: Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe, light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's

Service.

Opening Prayer: 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.**

Hymn:

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!.

The Sermon by Rev Howard Wright

Read Isaiah 25:4-9, Mark 16:1-20 – Being Alive

Hallelujah, Christ is risen – He is risen indeed, Hallelujah.

Easter Sunday is the most extraordinary of days.

I want to think about two images the Biblical story refers to, two dark foreboding and heavy objects: The Cross and the Stone.

The cross is a dark, even evil, image. Jesus was forced to carry his own cross, most likely just the cross piece, but this would have been heavy enough – so heavy in fact that Joseph of Arimathea had to be conscripted to help.

But it also was such a dramatic symbol of the death a person went to. Imagine having to carry the plug to your execution by electric chair, the rope to your own hanging, or the syringe to the doctor administering your own lethal injection. This is a horrific, a ghastly, menacing, and evil image.

The stone is a dark and foreboding even evil image. It was a massive immovable barrier, cutting of the living from the dead. It's estimated that it would have weighted 1½ tons – around the weight of a modern mini.

The stone stood like a gigantic full stop, the final stroke of the pen on this persons story. The stone had rolled down the groove it was held in by removal of the holding wedge. Now considerable strength, and probably a sturdy lever were needed to rolled back up its groove. This is why the women, loaded with spices, are unsure, how on earth they were going to do this.

But on arrival at the tomb, the stone was gone. The original Greek that the New Testament was written in hints at 'tossed aside', 'chucked away', not just rolled back up the groove, so it could be put back after you'd further perfumed the decaying body, or placed another body on a shelf within the cave, the stone was 'removed'.

And the tomb was visibly empty of the body. Bizarrely, and as just one piece of evidence for the certainty of Christ's physical resurrection, the valuable things had been left behind, that is, the cloths and spices. This was not grave robbers. But who would take the time and mess to peel off the sticky cloths and take the worthless body. If they had wanted to pretend Jesus was alive they would surely have just taken the lot!

The body had gone, Jesus is alive!

The women and Jesus' followers had carried the dark image of the cross and the finality of the tomb, a huge psychological weight with themselves for two days. How might they have felt, with the awfulness of all they had witnessed? They encountered such evil, and now held such emptiness and fear.

Many of us have suffered. We too have encountered things that have a dark foreboding about them, we've had concerns weighing heavy on us.

The resurrection changes everything!

The concerns of moving the stone are tossed aside, and every other concern with it. Gone was the fear and horror of the cross. The cross becomes for us an image of reassurance and hope. We use it in our churches, homes, and even around necks or tattooed on our skins. The cross has become the sign of God's love – 'God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, ...' John 3:16.

Our guilt and shame of failure is washed away, by the death and resurrection of Christ. *'Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ...'* Romans 8:1.

Our separation from God is repaired by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are welcomed into his family

'Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.' John 1:12-13. (Read also Romans 8:14-17)

Our fear of our own death is defeated by his perfect love (see: 1 John 4:18). Death has no bite in it: *'Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?'* 1 Corinthians 15:54b-55

God's resurrection power demonstrates that God can transform any seemingly dead thing, bringing light and hope, as antidotes to despair and death.

This Easter, and every day, commit to him, give thanks for the good, seek forgiveness for the failures, and trust him for the dark and foreboding. God wants to raise us to life, for us to know his resurrection power, and pursue his glory.

Easter Sunday: 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.**

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 forever. Amen.*

Blessing to be declared over yourselves, St Andrews and The Good Shepherd, the communities around us and our whole nation. 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV).

At the Church of the Good Shepherd

- Tea and Chat and Bowls: May 21st at 2pm in Church Hall & Church.
- Coffee and Questions: April 23rd and May 28th at 10.30am in Church Hall.
- The Community Cupboard, 2:45pm every Thursday in Church.

For Further information:

This paper and all parish details are on the website at <https://www.pariahofmedsteadandfourmarks.co.uk>