

Worship @ Home

Easter Sunday – 10.45am April 12th 2020

A Love Feast

Minister: Revd Val Reid

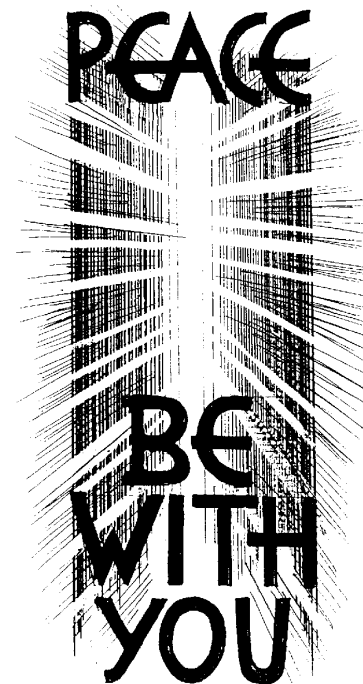
Music: Mike Crowley

Reader: Katherine Harris

Technology: John Hamblin

Beginners video: Louise Selby

All In video: Tom Lewis



'In order to increase. . . a grateful sense of all his mercies, I desired that, one evening in a quarter, all the men in band, on a second, all the women, would meet; and on a third, both men and women together; that we might together "eat bread" as the ancient Christians did, "with gladness and singleness of heart." At these love-feasts (so we termed them, retaining the name, as well as the thing, which was in use from the beginning) our food is only a little plain cake and water. But we seldom return from them without being fed, not only with the "meat which perisheth," but with "that which endureth to eternal life."'

(John Wesley: A plain account of the people called Methodists)

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Welcome to worship on Easter Morning. Christ is risen indeed! But it may not feel like it when we cannot gather together to sing, to pray, and share Holy Communion. So this morning I invite you to share in a Love Feast. This is a tradition going back to the earliest Methodists, and in fact John Wesley borrowed it from the Moravians. The early Band Meetings would meet to share food, and to share testimonies. Where have you seen God at work in your life? John Wesley said that testimony should never be more than two weeks old – not 'Where did you see God at work in your life twenty years ago?', but 'Where is God at work now?'. On Easter morning the first witnesses to the resurrection shared a testimony which was urgent and confusing, exciting and terrifying. They couldn't make sense of what they had seen, but they knew that God was at work in it. They had a glimpse of extraordinary Grace. This morning I invite you to reflect on where you have caught a glimpse of God's grace in these difficult days of lockdown. And – though we are apart – we will share food together. It may be 'a little plain cake and water' as John Wesley suggested – it may be coffee and a biscuit, it may be crisps and a glass of squash. But we will eat and remember.

Christ has risen while earth slumbers (StF 296)

Christ has risen while earth slumbers,
Christ has risen where hope died,
as he said and as he promised,
as we doubted and denied.
Let the moon embrace the blessing;
let the sun sustain the cheer;
let the world confirm the rumour:
Christ is risen, God is here!

Christ has risen for the people
whom he died to love and save;
Christ has risen for the women
bringing flowers to grace his grave.
Christ has risen for disciples
huddled in an upper room.
He whose word inspired creation
is not be silenced by the tomb.

Christ has risen to companion
former friends who fear the night,
sensing loss and limitation
where their faith had once burned bright.
They bemoan what is no longer,
they expect no hopeful sign
till Christ ends their conversation,
breaking bread and sharing wine.

Christ has risen and forever
lives to challenge and to change
all whose lives are stressed or damaged,
all who find religion strange.
Christ is risen. Christ is present
making us what he has been —
evidence of transformation
in which God is known and seen.

*Words by John L. Bell & Graham Maule
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Prayer

Let us pray.

Glory to you, O God:
you raised Jesus from the grave,
bringing us victory over death
and giving us eternal life.

Glory to you, O Christ:
for us and for our salvation
you overcame death
and opened the gate to everlasting life.

If we have fallen into despair,
Lord, forgive us.

If we have failed to hope in you,
Lord, forgive us.

Glory to you, O Holy Spirit:
you lead us into the truth
and breathe new life into us.

Glory to you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
now and for ever.

Amen

If we have been fearful of death,
Lord, forgive us.

If we have forgotten the victory of Christ,
Lord, forgive us.

Silence

May the living God raise you from despair,
give you victory over sin
and set you free in Christ. **Amen.**

COLLECT

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 in the unity of the Holy Spirit
be praise and honour, glory and might,
now and in all eternity. **Amen.**

Mark 16: 1-8

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Reflection: The testimony of Mary

Revd Val Reid

Crucifixion is a horrible death.
That's why they do it.
It's not quick.
It's agony.
You can't breathe.
In the end you suffocate.

And it's a lonely death.
You're on your own on the cross.
No friends to say goodbye.
No hand to hold.

The twelve who followed him everywhere – at the end they went home.
Locked themselves away.
Where it was safe.

But I was there.
With a couple of friends.
Women can sometimes slip under the radar.

We had followed him too.
We cooked him meals and gave him a bed for the night.
We financed his travels.
We listened to his words.
But the men who wrote the stories – they hardly ever mention us.
The support staff.
The key workers.
The ones who keep everything going.
We don't usually get noticed.

So the morning after the sabbath we went shopping.
We bought spices.
Someone has to go and perform the rituals.
Someone has to do the messy, ordinary tasks of death.
Even when it seems impossible.
Even when there's a huge great bolder in the way.
You still have to try.
Don't you?

I'd like to say I remember it all so clearly.
But I don't.
It was a muddle.
A confusion.
A terror.
The heavy stone rolled away.
The empty tomb.
The young man in white.

*You're looking for Jesus of Nazareth.
He was crucified.
He has been raised.
He is not here.
Look – there is the place they laid him.*

So – an emptiness.
Not here.

No body to anoint.
No domestic routine to make sense of this disturbing morning.
A void.

Grief – I feel like I can deal with grief.
But this?
If I'm honest – there had been a kind of relief too.
I thought it was all finished.
That there would be mourning.
And loss.
And letting go.
And the rites of burial.
And then I could go home.
The uncertainties of the last three years...
The constant wrestling with words and meanings...
The anxious fears...
Where next?
What next?
Will this be the thing – the word – the place – that finally provokes them?
That means the end of all our hopes?

When it was over, I thought things would go back to normal.
To how they were.
Before – all this.
I could do with a bit of normality.
The familiar routine of the ordinary.
Yes please.
A bit of ordinary.

*Go, tell his disciples, and Peter,
That he is going ahead of you to Galilee;
There you will see him,
Just as he told you.*

And so we ran away.
Fled from the tomb.
Another upheaval.
Another task.
Another challenge that overturned everything familiar.
Too much.
Stop now.
Don't ask something else of us.
Haven't we done enough?

No more energy.
Nothing left.
We were terrified.
Exhausted.
Drained.

All through his ministry,
 whenever he did something remarkable,
 whenever he healed a leper, or restored the sight of the blind,
 whenever he drove out demons, or told a lame man to get up and walk,
Every time, he said;
Don't tell anyone.
No-one must know.
Keep quiet.
I never understood why.
And of course people didn't keep quiet.
How could they?
How could they not tell?
How could they not share something so astonishing?
That's how it spread.
His fame.
That's why so many people crowded round him.
Hoping for another miracle.
I suppose that's why they turned against him in the end.
They thought he'd run out of tricks.

But now – *go and tell.*
The secret is out.
Share what you have seen and heard.
Even if you don't understand it.
Even if it makes no sense.
Even if it is just confusion and exhaustion and terror.
Go and tell.
But we didn't.
Too embarrassed.
Too bewildered.
We said nothing to anyone.
Because we were afraid.

And yet...
It makes a kind of sense.
Doesn't it?
Back to Galilee.
Where the whole thing began.

*That we might arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time....*

That we might have a fresh page.

A clean slate.

That we might re-write the story of our lives.

That death is not the end...

That what we thought was the end is a new beginning...

That what seemed to be an emptiness,

was in fact the space for something completely new to emerge...

Perhaps we should say something after all...

Now the green blade rises from the buried grain (StF 306)

Now the green blade rises from the buried grain,

Wheat that in the dark earth many years has lain;

Love lives again, that with the dead has been:

Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.

In the grave they laid Him, Love who had been slain,

Thinking that He never would awake again,

Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:

Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.

Forth he came at Easter, like the risen grain,

He that for the three days in the grave had lain;

Quick from the dead my risen Lord is seen:

Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.

When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,

Then Your touch can call us back to life again;

Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:

Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.

John Macleod Campbell Crum

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-5Bi2jM40E>

The peace

I invite you to share the peace. You may be able to share it with members of your household.

If you are on your own, you could offer it to your neighbourhood, to your friends worshipping with you in our separate homes, to yourself.

But peace is surely offered to us in Christ.

The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and said: 'Peace be with you!'
Then they were glad when they saw the Lord.

Alleluia! The peace of the risen Christ be always with you.
And also with you. Alleluia!

We share the peace with one another

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, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
(1 Peter 1: 3-5)

The Love Feast

Bless the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
You created us in love.
You give us to each other in love.
You invite us to the feast of your kingdom.
Bless the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

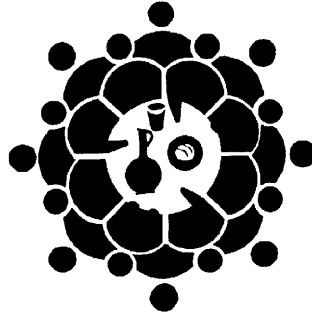
Bless the son, our saviour Jesus Christ.
You came to live among us.
You endured the agony of betrayal, abandonment, death.
But death did not have the last word.
The stone, which was very large, was rolled back.
The tomb was empty.
Bless the son, our risen saviour Jesus Christ.

Bless the spirit, which holds us in community.
You are our comforter and our disturber.
You inspire us and you challenge us.
You turn a little plain cake and water into the food of Heaven.
Bless the spirit, which holds us in community.

I invite you now to share the food you have brought for our Love Feast. If you are with other members of your household, you can eat together. If you are on your own, you are eating with friends across Hitchin and beyond, who join with each other in remembering our risen Lord.

If you have forgotten to get some food ready, go and get some now!

We eat together...



Methodist Love Feasts traditionally include testimony.

This is a chance to share with each other what God is doing in our lives right now.

Let's begin by watching this short video of the children in Beginners sharing their testimony of what Jesus means to them.



Beginners Video (3 ½ minutes): About Jesus

I invite you now to share your own testimony.

What glimpses of God have you seen in the last couple of weeks?

Share it with those you are watching with.

Listen to what they have to say.

If you're on your own, you might say it out loud to God, who listens.

You might write it on a piece of paper or a card. Put it somewhere where you will see it each day, as a reminder that God is surely at work amongst us.

If you're tech-minded, you can write it in the comments section on You Tube as you watch!

We share our testimonies...

Prayers

In the power of the resurrection we offer our prayers to God.

Let us pray.

Remember, O Lord, in your love
the Church throughout the world . . .
those recently baptized and confirmed . . .
those who minister to others . . .

Silence

May your whole Church know your power and be a sign that Christ is risen.

Lord of life,

hear us in your love.

Remember in your love the world you have made . . .

those who seek a fair and proper use of the world's resources . . .

those who strive for justice and peace among the nations . . .

Silence

May the whole earth be transformed by mercy and rejoice in hope.

Lord of life,

hear us in your love.

Remember in your love those who suffer . . .

the victims of violence and injustice . . .

those who mourn . . .

Silence

May all in need find comfort, strength and freedom in the living Christ.

Lord of life,

hear us in your love.

Remember in your love those who have died:

those who have confessed the faith

and those whose faith is known to you alone.

Silence

May all your children receive grace and light according to their needs and come at last to share with all the saints in life eternal.

Lord of life,

hear us in your love.

Gracious God, we ask these prayers through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord and Saviour.

Amen.

I invite you now to say the Lord's prayer out loud.

Use whichever version you are familiar with.

Use whichever language feels like your mother tongue.

Although we are apart, we join together in praying the prayer that Jesus gave us.

Our Father...

Blessing

God the Father,
by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead,
strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life;
and may almighty God bless you,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Alleluia!

Go in joy and peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Alleluia!



All In video (3 ½ minutes): **Rolling Stones Away**

See what a morning

See what a morning, gloriously bright
With the dawning of hope in Jerusalem;
Folded the grave-clothes
Tomb filled with light,
As the angels announce Christ is risen!
See God's salvation plan, wrought in love,
Borne in pain, paid in sacrifice,
Fulfilled in Christ, the Man, for He lives,
Christ is risen from the dead!

See Mary weeping: 'Where is He laid?
As in sorrow she turns from the empty tomb;
Hears a voice speaking, calling her name:
It's the Master, the Lord raised to life again!
The voice that spans the years,
Speaking life, stirring hope,
Bringing peace to us,
Will sound till He appears,
For He lives, Christ is risen from the dead!

One with the Father, Ancient of Days,
Through the Spirit
Who clothes faith with certainty,
Honour and blessing, glory and praise
To the King crowned
With power and authority!
And we are raised with Him,
Death is dead, love has won
Christ has conquered;
And we shall reign with Him,
For He lives, Christ is risen from the dead!

Stuart Townend & Keith Getty Copyright © 2003 Thankyou Music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xM-fpXayUg>

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