

# 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2024

## 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.**

**Song:**

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.

Lo! Jesus meets us, risen from the  
tomb.  
Lovingly He greets us, scatters fear  
and gloom;  
let His church with gladness hymns  
of triumph sing,  
for the Lord now liveth; death hath  
lost its sting.



The Good  
Shepherd  
Four Marks

Responding to God's Love

Thine be the glory, risen,  
conquering Son;  
endless is the victory Thou o'er  
death hast won.

No more we doubt Thee, glorious  
Prince of life!!  
Life is nought without Thee; aid us  
in our strife;  
make us more than conqu'rors,  
through Thy deathless love;  
bring us safe through Jordan to Thy  
home above.

Thine be the glory, risen,  
conquering Son;  
endless is the victory Thou o'er  
death hast won.

## **Acts 4.32-35. John 20.19-31 – Now we live.**

### **The Sermon by Rev. Howard Wright**

The resurrection is a momentous, earth-shattering, moment in history. Nothing will ever be the same. We date our years because of Jesus (though there's a push for Common Era, it's still dated from Jesus).

Because of Jesus, death is transformed and the whole of life on earth impacted positively. The depth of joy, peace, and love, experienced by the early disciples transformed them and drove them to transform the world.

Because of Jesus there is an increase in compassion for the other. Jesus' 'Golden Rule' (Matthew 7:12.) *So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you...* . Resulted in health care for all, education for all, a foundation for law, an ethic for human and environmental flourishing, and an unlimited inspiration for beautiful art and creativity. We can now live as a people with hope – life is not just about now, there is more than this – we have a bigger vision of life because of Jesus.

The early church transformed its world, not immediately, and not easily, but they did – and we are invited to join in and transform our world.

We face a transforming moment in our history – Medstead and Four Marks are now one parish – a new future awaits us. The disciples, before Jesus appeared were in fear, and locked-in. We may have fears about the future, but Jesus speaks 'peace,' and comes into the midst of us to unlock our hearts, and move us forwards.

Will we grasp the momentous transforming power of the resurrection and allow it to transform us and our communities propelled forwards by the God of love and hope? There are three things to help us in this passage:

Firstly, acknowledge God. The disciples recognise Jesus, as their Lord. We're not all at the same place in our understanding – not all of us get it straight away. Thomas needed a moment longer – but he is first to out loud declare what they all knew – Jesus is both Lord and God! This is both extraordinary and wonderful. Extraordinary, that God would care, and wonderful, that he would want us as his children.

Do you know Jesus as both Lord and God? Do you know his joy, peace, and most importantly, love? You may want to take an Alpha course – there's a little wait but we hope to run a new course in September. Do read the Bible and pray! Matthew 12:12 says, *'To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge.*

*But for those who are not listening, even what little understanding they have will be taken away from them.'* So, seek understanding.

God longs to bless you. He longs to bless us as a community of communities (4 congregations). Jesus breaths on his friends and says, *receive the Holy Spirit* (John 20:22). Jesus by His Spirit lives in us. *Go on being filled*, says Paul (Ephesians 5:18). Receive his blessing – walk with him, listen to him.

Secondly, be alike God. The first disciples, do what disciples do, they live like their master has modelled and taught them. They loved one another (John 13:34) – as God had loved them in and through Jesus, and now by the Holy Spirit. And, they shared life and lived generously.

There was a cost and there is a cost. If we want to make a difference we have join in with our resources. (See Acts 4:32-35). We have to hire staff and pay for the running of our buildings – and we'll come back to this from time to time!

The early Christians were not perfect. Even Jesus comes with his scars – pains of the past. But these have been transformed – as we too are being transformed into the likeness of Jesus (See 2 Corinthians 3:18 and Romans 8:29). There will be bumpy moments – we carry the hurts and prides of our past, but God can transform these, and we can grow even more into the likeness of Jesus.

The secret of this transformation is found earlier in Acts (Read 2:42), of which our reading is an echo. We're going to study Philippians together on Sundays this term and it's important we're all part of this. You can catch-up with the sermon via the 9.30am recording or paper service online, and there are study questions for small groups too.

Finally, act for God. Jesus says to his friends then and to us today – *'As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.'* (John 20:21). Jesus was 'sent' to bring Good News (see John 1:1-14 & 20:31). We are sent to bring Good News read Matthew 28:19-20.

We are to share Jesus in our actions and words. It's why we're here individually and collectively – and we won't be here collectively for long unless we get our act together (note Acts 4:33).

As we begin to work together, think about how you can help. There's a need for people to pray, for people to give time, skill, and money. There is a need for others to join the youth and children's team, and be ready to serve alongside Virginia once she arrives. There's a need for help with our service to older folk with more drivers, etc.

Not all of us get it straight away – like Thomas – but it's the reason for Gospel! And we pray that like the early church we might be a church, *praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.* (Acts 2:47)

***Second Sunday of Easter:*** Almighty Father, you have given your only Son to die for our sins and to rise again for our justification: grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness that we may always serve you in pureness of living and truth; through the merits of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **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, 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).

***The Notices:*** We are now holding services in the building on Sundays at 8am and 9.30am, and are live streaming the 9.30 service. This Paper Service will continue for the moment and is generally available the week after the service.

- Tea and Chat: April 17<sup>th</sup> at 2pm in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Bowls: April 17<sup>th</sup> at 2pm in the Church.
- Coffee and Questions: April 24<sup>th</sup> at 10.30am in Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise: TBA
- The Community Cupboard, 2:45pm every Thursday in Church.
- COGS Tots and Tinytots are on Mondays.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.