

Call to worship:

As the women bowed their faces to the ground in terror, the two men asked them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He has risen! Remember how He told you while He was still in Galilee: ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.’”

Prayer

Heavenly Father refresh us this Easter season with the simple, stunning truth that this Jesus we read about in the pages of Scripture is the same who is risen and gathers us into his kingdom of grace, mercy and peace.

A singular Resurrection event to remember and ponder:

While they were describing these events, Jesus Himself stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” But they were startled and frightened, thinking they had seen a spirit.

“Why are you troubled,” Jesus asked, “and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at My hands and My feet. It is I Myself. Touch Me and see—for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and feet.

While they were still in disbelief because of their joy and amazement, He asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” So they gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and He took it and ate it in front of them.

Prayer response:

Lord Jesus, thank you for coming to us like this, steadying us with your word of peace, assuring us with proof of the most amazing fact ever; that you live, you are in charge, you will make everything right according to your plan for us for this earth, forever.

Reign king Jesus.

Hymn: by Edmond Budry

1. 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 hath lost its sting.
3. 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.

Scriptures on the meaning of the Resurrection:

- Luke 24.44-49,
- Romans 1.1-6,
- Colossians 3.1-4.

These Scriptures build your faith as you realise the fact of the Resurrection, what the Resurrection means for world history, and, in the Colossians passage, what it means for you, for your life choices, dealing with your problems and your high calling. A week's worth of rich reflection.

Prayer: identifying with the global church including those under attack

Our Father in Heaven, thank You that Jesus destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. We praise You for Your triumph over the grave through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and that anyone who trusts in Him will know living hope by a relationship with Him.

We thank You that Christ in us is that hope of glory. We pray that the Church worldwide, particularly those suffering and persecuted believers, will draw strength and encouragement from His victory and abound in hope, for we ask in the wonderful and triumphant Name of Jesus. (2 Timothy 1:10; Colossians 1:27)¹

Easter Day message. Horror to Happiness; Christ is risen and at large!

Just another ordinary school day begins. The night before, a long-distance phone call from Yeelanna farm to London talking to Dad across the waves. My sister Janet and I leave Mum and Dad to talk farm business. Now catch the Wildeloo school bus. A sluggish start to the day. Kids piling on along the way, still half asleep.

Then it happens! Turmoil. Janet incidentally grabs at the wire fence to steady herself. The ugly headmaster catches her and bawls her out across the yard. He had already lectured the whole school the day before not to touch the fragile fence needing repair.

By the end of that day my whole world is in more turmoil. Janny is at Port Lincoln Hospital diagnosed with paralysing, possibly fatal, poliomyelitis. Mum is hastily arranging a DC3 Guinea Airways flight to Adelaide Crippled Children's Home. I am bundled off to stay with folk I don't know in a house that scares me – from which I abscond, find my way home to an empty farm – an eight year old with a desperately sick sister, mother four hundred miles away in Adelaide, a Dad a million miles away in England. What now?

Turmoil and tragedy marked those three feast days in Jerusalem. The disciples and the women were stunned. The degrading interrogation. The horror of the flogging, the naked mangled body of this one who had seemed to rule by sheer power of his spoken word. As kind as it was authoritative. He saved and blessed so many. Yet here he was. The haters who stalked him all his ministry finally got him.

¹ From the Barnabas prayer for Easter Sunday

Horror to Happiness

Where was Peter, the denier? Wretched soul! The women left alone, the rest of the boys having fled. Maybe their womanhood would keep them safe, but no guarantee. Brutal interrogation could still happen. Judas? Finished! This went on for three full days and sleepless nights. Total devastation. But love was there. The women tenderly mixing perfumed spices for burial, dear old Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus permitted to take the corpse down for decent interment.

The next scenes always thrill me to read again. The most documented event in the history of literature at that time, probably ever. The women approaching the tomb with their final caring for his needs, they loved him. The one who had wept over his feet unfurling her locks to dry them; she was coming to anoint. Then, at the tomb entrance those stunning words: "He is not here, he is risen. Tell the disciples, and Peter, he is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you".

Two grieving men on the road to Emmaus chatting with a stranger who gives them a solid Bible study on the way until settling for the evening he breaks bread at dinner time. Stunned awareness! "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scripture to us?"

The garden connection. Mary through sobbing eyes pleading to the 'Gardener': "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." That one-word answer: "Mary". Stunned with indescribable joy this woman remembers the teacher's word and it rivets faith into her soul: "Son of Man ... spit upon, mock, flog, and kill him. Three days later he will rise."

She falls on his feet. Gently at first: "Do not hold onto me for I have not yet returned to the Father." Then those words from Jesus that believers world-wide repeat; a revelation of what all this was for: "Go instead to my brothers and tell them, I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God". All that is his, the eternal Son will share with his friends.

All of that for this! Not only would the teaching of Jesus gradually permeate the minds of men and women and give rise to the most ordered, peaceful and just societies the world has ever seen. Not only would missionaries bring the light of love to longing cultures like the ones happening at this very moment in Jos plateau Nigeria, where Muslim Fulani herdsmen and Christian farmers are sharing life guided by the Lord's sermon on the Mount. All of these things flow from the resurrected Christ. And personally, each person who would take him at his word, like Mary of old, would be of one eternal family. With one Father of endless love. God himself.

For this boy then, the day came when the passenger ship docked at Outer Harbour. Janny was lying in the ambulance on the wharf, Mum and I were next to her and as the Orcades was tug-pushed alongside, we spotted Dad waving down to us. Unforgettable happiness. Safe. Home.

For this man now, it is all wrapped up in this bundle of living hope. Joined into the eternal family together: "My Father and your Father".

Reflection:

1. The Resurrection of Christ is the most documented and evidenced event in history. 2. It is a unique event, and must be, because it is the foundation for the renewal of all things, the new heaven and earth wherein dwells righteousness. 3. The resurrection of the crucified Christ is God's mercy in judging the world but saving humanity.

"If you confess with your mouth 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved"ⁱ

Hymn: *The power of the Cross, by Stuart Townend*

- Oh, to see the dawn of the darkest day:
Christ on the road to Calvary.
Tried by sinful men, torn and beaten, then nailed to a cross of wood.

*This, the power of the cross:
Christ became sin for us, took the blame, bore the wrath:
We stand forgiven at the cross.*
- Oh, to see the pain written on Your face
Bearing the awesome weight of sin;
Every bitter thought, every evil deed crowning Your bloodstained brow.
- Now the daylight flees, now the ground beneath
Quakes as its Maker bows His head.
Curtain torn in two, dead are raised to life; 'Finished!' the victory cry.
- Oh, to see my name written in the wounds,
For through Your suffering I am free.
Death is crushed to death, life is mine to live, won through Your selfless love.

Refrain

Response prayer:

Like Mary, Peter, the women and the other disciples, teach and change us to desire the company of Jesus. To want to hear from him all about Resurrection hope and life. We know the truth because you have revealed it to us in Scripture and, we gladly confess that you are indeed Lord and Christ. Amen.

Benediction:

Now to Him who is able to strengthen you by my gospel and by the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery concealed for ages past but now revealed and made known through the writings of the prophets by the command of the eternal God, to lead all nations to the obedience that comes from faith — to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ!

Amen.

This service was prepared by Rev Ian Clarkson for HopeNet SA

ⁱ Romans 10.10