

**Drouin Congregation 12.04.20**

**Easter Day**

***Before you begin this service make any necessary preparation under In Relation to Baptism note 3.***

**Christ is Risen : he is Risen indeed.**

**Hallelujah: Christ is Risen**

**Christ is Risen – he is Risen indeed. Hallelujah.**

If you have been raised with Christ,  
seek the things above, where Christ is,  
seated at the right hand of God.

*Col 3:1*

**Collect for Easter Day.**

O life-giving God, you permitted your Son, Jesus Christ  
to suffer death on the cross for our redemption,  
and by his glorious resurrection  
you have delivered us from the power of death.  
May we turn from sin every day  
so that we may always live with him  
in the joy of his resurrection.  
We pray this prayer in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Hymn TiS 370 Christ the Lord is risen today.**

Christ the Lord is risen today / Hallelujah / Let the whole creation say Hallelujah  
Raise your joys and triumphs high: / Hallelujah / Sing now heaven, and earth reply; / Hallelujah.

Love's redeeming work is done / Hallelujah, / fought the fight, the battle won; Hallelujah  
vain the stone, the watch, the seal; Hallelujah / Christ has burst the gates of hell; Hallelujah.

Lives again our glorious king; Hallelujah / where, O death, is now your sting? Hallelujah  
Ponce he died our souls to save; Hallelujah / where your victory. O grave? Hallelujah.

Soar we now where Christ has led. Hallelujah / following our exalted Head; Hallelujah  
made like him, like him we rise; Hallelujah / ours the cross, the grave, the skies; Hallelujah.

*Charles Wesley 1707-1788*

**Prayer of praise and gladness.**

Lord our God, you are full of surprises.  
First you were present when Mary gave birth to Jesus  
and you propelled shepherds and wise men  
from near and far away to attend the infant child in wonder and worship.  
Thirty three years later  
though you were present to Jesus in the terror and agony of crucifixion  
he felt isolated from you, deserted by you,  
asking why you had abandoned him  
But you held him in your love, and in his dying he yielded himself to you

saying “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit”.  
 And now, on this Easter Day, we remember that,  
 by your power, you raised him in the form of resurrected life.  
 This resurrection and new form of life  
 was astonishing to Peter and John and Mary Magdalene  
 just as it is to us.  
 You are a God of surprising surprises  
 but as we gather to hear once again the Gospel writer’s accounts,  
 we have the sense of praising you with gladness,  
 not a superficial gladness but a deep gladness  
 a gladness which fills our hearts with joy.  
 This is the breath of our prayer. Amen.

### Scripture:

[The meditations following the scripture lessons are offered with help from some of my commentary friends !!]

### Psalm 118: 1-2. 14 -24 God’s steadfast love endures forever.

Verses 1 & 2 [along with 3 & 4] set the context for community worship. We can imagine the leader in the synagogue saying some of the words with the congregation reciting the refrain “The steadfast love of God endures for ever”. It’s a bit like the way the psalm for the day is set out in *Uniting in Worship* with the minister or worship leader saying the words in plain print and the congregation responding with the words in bold print.

Verses 14-24 . There are a number of elements here.

- 1) a confession by the person previously endangered or at risk. Verse 14
- 2) we have description of victory celebrations verse 15 following
- 3) there are spoken elements of a ‘gate liturgy’ in verses 19 &20.
- 4) there is the worshipper’s short prayer of thanksgiving to God v.21
- 5) and finally an acclamation of praise either by the triumphant worshipper or by the gathered worshippers. verses 22-24.

The ‘gate liturgy’ finds an echo in Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem which we remembered on Palm Sunday.

The unifying theme which runs through the verses and binds them together is that of celebration – and of course that makes it a very suitable psalm reading for Easter Sunday and it can be compared with or to the passion and resurrection story of Jesus.

Those among us who follow cricket will remember player and commentator Richie Benaud. He had a word he used frequently. “**Marvellous**” . It’s actually a marvellous word !! And see how it appears in our text “The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord’s doing and it is **marvellous** in our eyes” Quite so !

To jump forward: Christians can affirm that the resurrection of Jesus is “the Lord’s doing” and it is “marvellous in our eyes”.

### Acts 10:34-43 The apostle Peter sums up and proclaims the Gospel

We might be tempted to think that this passage is all about Peter. It's not. It's as much about St Luke who wrote it and a careful reading of the speech or sermon, shows how much it owes to Luke. There are some striking, important, parallels - for example

- ❖ the stress on Jesus' anointing with the spirit [compare v 38 with Luke 3:22; 4:1, 14 & 18]
- ❖ his works of healing [v 38 compare Luke 4:31-41]
- ❖ the dawning of Easter faith in the context of a sacred meal with the risen Lord [v. 41 compare Luke 24: 30-35].

Now these observations don't take away from the power of Peter's speech, if anything they add to it because it shows how apostolic preaching was so strongly influenced by the writers of the Gospels.

Though it might be useful to explore each section of Peter's succinct speech in detail I think we might find greater benefit, since we are reading the passage on Easter Day, to look at two broad themes.

The first broad theme is *Easter faith*. Central to Peter's sermon is that "God raised him to life on the third day and allowed him to be clearly seen [v.40]. But this is not unforeseen. Its roots lie in the Old Testament [note v 43 "and all the prophets testify about him"]. **as climactic as the moment of Easter is, it is not a moment suspended from history but part of a larger drama interwoven with history. The story occurs in such places as Galilee, the country of the Jews, and Jerusalem. It involves human actors such as John the Baptist and those with whom Jesus worked and ministered. It was set in ordinary places among ordinary people that the Extraordinary was manifested**".

[Carl R. Holladay Preaching through the Christian Year].

The second broad theme [actually two knitted together] is *the impartiality of God* and *the universality of salvation*. Peter begins [v 34] "I truly understand that God has no favourites – i/e shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him". This means, I think, that God's work in Christ extends to anyone and everyone. There is a universal implication in the specificity of God's saving work. As Charles Wesley would pen in his incomparable hymn:

"Your **undistinguishing regard** / was cast on Adam's fallen race  
**for all** you have in Christ prepared / sufficient, sovereign, saving grace.....  
**The world** he suffered to redeem, / **for all** he has the atonement made  
 for those that would not come to him / the ransom of his life was paid.

### John 20:1-18 Peter, John, and Mary Magdalene: first witnesses to the resurrection.

It's not really surprising that Peter puts the resurrection as a central tenant in his preaching in view of the fact that he was one of the first three witnesses at the opened tomb. But note that Peter and John were not witnesses to the resurrection – they were only witnesses to the fact that the body of Jesus was not where it was supposed to be. After they had made that discovery they went off to their homes [v 10].

Admittedly v 8 reads "Then the other disciple [John] who reached the tomb first also went in **and he saw and believed**" Believed what? I happen to think that he simply believed the evidence of his eyes – that the body of Jesus was not there .because, you see, "they did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the dead [v 9]. Those two disciples – with the rest of them – came to know the Risen Christ on the witness of Mary and at the subsequent appearance of Christ later in the day and on other occasions.

Mary is the first witness to the resurrection. Overcome with grief and sadness she stands crying uncontrollably outside the open tomb. Through her tears she sees the one she fails to recognize – until the Stranger [ mistaken for the gardener] speaks her name. Suddenly her world explodes with incredulity. Her testimony is “I have seen the Lord”.

Yes – she had seen the Lord; but let’s remember that first the Lord saw Mary and actually used her name. Perhaps we can visualise the resurrected One speaking **our** name: at that point we’ll realise he’s no longer the unidentified horticulturist but our Risen Lord and Saviour – Jesus Christ. Then we can say or sing or shout **Hallelujah.**

### **An Affirmation of Faith**

Christ Jesus, Child of Mary, God with us,  
King and Suffering Servant, High Priest and Lamb of God,  
Teacher and Word, living, suffering, dying and rising again, / you challenge, redeem and restore us.

Holy Spirit, Breath of life, Counsellor and Comforter, /  
Fire of God, you inspire, sustain, and purify us.  
Forming us in the nature of Christ, / transforming us with your gifts,  
you bind us together in one body, your church.

God of all creation, made known to us in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit,  
your boundless love exposes our rebellion and greed.  
A mother who will not abandon her child, / a father who welcomes the prodigal home,  
you forgive, accept and embrace us / and call us into loving communion for ever.  
In life and death we belong to you, / everlasting God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

(Adopted by 1993 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand)

### **In relation to Baptism.**

1. In many parts of the church the Candidates for Baptism are presented to the congregation, usually after an extended period of preparation. They are then Baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
2. In addition those have been baptised previously, see this as an appropriate season to renew their baptismal vows. It is worth noting that when Martin Luther was assailed by doubt he exclaimed “I am baptised”.
3. Prepare a small bowl of tap water then, if it is fitting for you, you might like to re-affirm your baptismal vows.as follows:

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Here and now I want to re-affirm my Baptism and I make the sign of the Cross on my forehead.

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,**

**I believe in Jesus Christ God’s much-loved Son**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,**

**the holy Christian church / the communion of saints**

**the forgiveness of sins / the resurrection of the body**

**and the life everlasting / and I ask the congregation to pray for me**

**I remember and rejoice that I am a loved by God, that I am a servant of Christ, the the Holy Spirit lives within me. And I pray that almighty God will continue to bless me and keep me in eternal life.**

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Notices:

- 1) Last Sunday I went into the church and read out loud the names of all members of the congregation, made the sign of the cross as I usually do at the end of a service, and pronounced a the blessing of God. So far as I was able I included members of your families.
- 2) I would like to thank our secretary Andrew for making provision for distributing the order of service to those one email and then for getting copies to the elders.
- 3) I would also like to thank the Elders for distributing hard copies to members who do not have computers and/or email.
- 4) We do not know at this stage how much longer the social distancing rules are going to apply so if any of you have notices and/or prayer requests please let me have them [*as long as requests for prayers for individuals have those persons consent*]. My home phone number is 5625 1748: if leaving a message please speak slowly and clearly. My email is: pmrobson@dcsi.net.au

*One of my long-time friends wrote to me the other day in the following terms.*

"I am really mad with this corona virus thing. It is robbing us of everything we treasure and one of those is to gather with other Christians and hear the old, old story and reflect and maybe cry and recommit myself and sing and sing out the gospel story. Well, I know I can still do it, and the amazing technology that we have at hand is nothing short of amazing, but it is still not the same as standing shoulder to shoulder and singing in sad lament or raising my voice to exaltation as utter Hallelujah".  
*Is that how you have felt?*

**Hymn TiS 380 Yours [Thine] be the glory.**

Yours be the glory, risen, conquering Son / endless is the victory over death you've won;  
angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away / kept the folded grave clothes where your body lay  
*Yours be the glory, risen conquering Son / endless is the victory over death you've won.*

See, 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 the Lord is living, death has lost its sting.  
*Yours be the glory, risen conquering Son / endless is the victory over death you've won.*

No more we doubt you, glorious Prince of life / life is naught without you, aid us in our strife;  
make us more than conquerors through your deathless love, / bring us safe through Jordan to your home above.  
*Yours be the glory, risen conquering Son / endless is the victory over death you've won.*

**May the blessing of God, the Father, God, the Son, and God, the Holy Spirit be with us all.  
Amen**

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