**Home Service Sheet Easter Sunday 2023 (9th April)**

**Call To Worship**                **Psalm 118:14-17**

The Lord is my strength and my song;
    he has become my salvation.
Glad songs of salvation
    are in the tents of the righteous:
“The right hand of the Lord does valiantly,

   the right hand of the Lord exalts,
    the right hand of the Lord does valiantly!”

I shall not die, but I shall live,
    and recount the deeds of the Lord.

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, on this Easter morning we lift our hearts and voices in praise to You! We open up our lives to You with joy! We thank You for our Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Light of the world who has brought death to death, and life to life. We come into your presence with singing, our hearts echoing the chorus of the ages, “Hosanna! Alleluia forever and ever! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!” Help us to celebrate Your resurrection this morning, and be aware of your risen presence with us. Grant to us wisdom and understanding as we read Your Word, and help us to respond with love and obedience to You. This we ask in the Name of Your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, amen.

**Hymn                                     Christ the Lord is risen today** by *Charles Wesley*

[*https://youtu.be/WSs4\_vc0pq0*](https://youtu.be/WSs4_vc0pq0)

Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!

Earth and heaven in chorus say, Alleluia!

Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!

Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia!

Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia!

Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!

Once he died our souls to save, Alleluia!

Where's thy victory, boasting grave? Alleluia!

Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!

Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!

Death in vain forbids him rise, Alleluia!

Christ has opened paradise, Alleluia!

Soar we now where Christ has led, Alleluia!

Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!

Made like him, like him we rise, Alleluia!

Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!

**The Lord’s Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.

**1st Reading                           Jeremiah 31:1-6**

“At that time, declares the Lord, I will be the God of all the clans of Israel, and they shall be my people.”

Thus says the Lord:
“The people who survived the sword
    found grace in the wilderness;
when Israel sought for rest,
   the Lord appeared to him[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jeremiah+31%3A1-6&version=ESV#fen-ESV-19695a)] from far away.
I have loved you with an everlasting love;
    therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.
Again I will build you, and you shall be built,
    O virgin Israel!
Again you shall adorn yourself with tambourines
    and shall go forth in the dance of the merrymakers.
Again you shall plant vineyards
    on the mountains of Samaria;
the planters shall plant
    and shall enjoy the fruit.
For there shall be a day when watchmen will call
    in the hill country of Ephraim:
‘Arise, and let us go up to Zion,
    to the Lord our God.’”

**2nd Reading                          John 20:1-18**

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb.Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus'head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord” - and that he had said these things to her.

**Reflection**

Christ is risen, hallelujah! That’s what we expect to hear and proclaim together at Easter, and it’s as true today as it always was. That, however, is not where our reading from the prophet Jeremiah starts. “The time is coming when I will be the God of all the tribes of Israel, and they will be my people.” Jeremiah spoke God’s message during a very tough time in Israel’s history when it looked likely that many would be sent into exile in a foreign land again because of the sin of the nation. Yet, God again restated His promise to His people, that He would remain their God, even through the darkest of times. What a wonderful word of hope!

Over the past three or so years we have experienced many changes in our world and the way things are done. Yet, our God is still constant, a firm foundation, on whom we can rely. Back in Genesis 17:7-8 God said something very similar to Abraham, and He continues to encourage us with that same message throughout His Word. He will be our God, and we will be His people. Notice how God says ‘all the tribes of Israel’ because this, I believe, is significant. It’s not just the twelve historic tribes in view here, but rather it is people from all the nations who will be grafted into the true vine that is Jesus Christ (see John 15).

God speaks of his mercy and love towards Israel too, and in verse 6 of our reading from Jeremiah, the call is issued as far afield as Ephraim, “Let’s go up to Zion, to the Lord our God.” This is a call that ultimately will be issued to all who will hear and respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Despite not being born into God’s covenant people, all who place their faith in Christ are drawn in to God’s family where we may worship him as ***our*** God. There was a time when He was known as the God of Israel, but through the sending of His Son and the coming of the Holy Spirit, He is the one true God of everywhere.

We hear a similar call issued to Mary Magdalene in verse 16 of our reading from John’s Gospel, “go to my brothers and tell them that I am returning to him who is my Father and their Father, my God and their God.” She is to call the disciples back to following Jesus from the depths of their confusion, disbelief and possible despair following the crucifixion. We see some of that as Peter and John race to the tomb only to find it open and empty. John seems to believe that Christ is risen, whilst Peter is still confused, and doesn’t know quite what to make of the empty tomb. Both of these are still common responses when people hear the accounts of Jesus’ resurrection that are recorded for us in the scriptures.

Through Jesus’ message to Mary, and the one that Jesus would subsequently give to his disciples (Matthew 28:18-20), we ourselves have come to faith in Jesus Christ as the risen Son of God who died for us. The call is issued for us to continue spreading the Good News that Christ has died, Christ is risen and Christ will come again. God’s message to humanity has remained consistent – ‘I will be your God if you will be my people.’ The only way we can do that is through living by faith in Jesus, a gift given to us by the Holy Spirit! By this we can be part of God’s people and he will be our God. Amen.

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ. We are humbled and grateful for the privilege of being able to read Your Word and the truths it contains. Thank You for Your love and grace in sending Jesus to be the substitute for our sin. Thank You for His sacrificial death and glorious Resurrection, and that by believing in Him, we have life everlasting. Help us to stand strong in our faith and keep us from allowing our feelings and senses to override the truth of Your Word. Grant us boldness to share the wondrous Gospel news with family, friends and neighbours that they too may enter into His wondrous Kingdom as His adopted children. This we ask in Jesus' name, amen.

**Benediction**

May the God of peace, who raised from the dead our Lord Jesus, provide us with every good thing we need in order to do his will; and the blessing of almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with us now and forever. Amen.