**Home Service Sheet For 31st March 2024 (Easter Sunday)**

**Call to Worship:**                  **Psalm 118:14-24**

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.  
The Lord has disciplined me severely,  
    but he has not given me over to death.

Open to me the gates of righteousness,  
    that I may enter through them  
    and give thanks to the Lord.  
This is the gate of the Lord;  
    the righteous shall enter through it.  
I thank you that you have answered me  
    and have become my salvation.  
The stone that the builders rejected  
    has become the cornerstone.   
This is the Lord's doing;  
    it is marvellous in our eyes.  
This is the day that the Lord has made;  
    let us rejoice and be glad in it.

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, on this glorious Easter Sunday, we celebrate the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ. Just as the sun rises, may the light of His victory over death shine in our hearts and lives. Fill us with joy and gratitude for the hope and new life found in Him, we pray. Loving God, on this resurrection day, we give thanks for the sacrificial love of Jesus and the redemption we find in His resurrection. Thank you for the gift of salvation and the promise of eternal life we have through His victory over sin and death. Amen!

**Hymn                                     In Christ alone**by ***Stuart Townend & Keith Getty***

<https://youtu.be/SkFlUzcGvrE?si=5KDtGdwjAES9-4sU>

In Christ alone my hope is found, He is my light, my strength, my song;  
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground, firm through the fiercest drought and storm.  
What heights of love, what depths of peace, when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!  
My Comforter, my All in All, here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! – who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless babe.  
This gift of love and righteousness, scorned by the ones He came to save:  
Till on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied –  
For every sin on Him was laid; here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay, Light of the world by darkness slain:  
Then bursting forth in glorious day up from the grave He rose again!  
And as He stands in victory sin’s curse has lost its grip on me,  
For I am His and He is mine – bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the power of Christ in me;  
From life’s first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.  
No power of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck me from His hand:  
Till He returns or calls me home, here in the power of Christ I’ll stand.

**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.

**Bible Reading                                 John 20:1-10**

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. **2**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.” **3**So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb.**4**Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. **5**And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. **6**Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, **7**and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. **8**Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; **9**for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. **10**Then the disciples went back to their homes.

**Reflection**

All 4 of the Biblical Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) feature an account of the resurrection morning. Each account has different details and is written from a particular perspective with its own emphasis. This does not, however, mean for one minute that they contradict one another. Instead, it indicates to us just how much meaning there is within the events surrounding that first Easter Sunday morning. Mark leaves us to make up our own minds about whether Jesus was raised from the dead, not including any witness accounts of Jesus’ resurrection. The other Gospel writers, however, tell us who saw the risen Jesus and joyfully proclaim His victory over the devil, sin and death.

John begins his account with Mary Magdalene and what she saw, before introducing Peter and himself, John the Gospel writer. If we want a full account of the resurrection, we need to read all 4 accounts and put together who saw what and when. John tells us that whilst it is still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb where Jesus’ body has been laid. We know that the women were there when Joseph of Arimathea brought our Lord’s body to the tomb, so we know that she was at the correct tomb. John notes that the stone had already been removed from the entrance to the tomb, and clearly this both disturbed and upset Mary. She runs to the disciples and says “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” (v.2)

# Clearly Mary doesn’t know what has happened yet. As far as she is concerned there is a natural explanation for the absence of Jesus’ body, except it doesn’t make any sense. The tomb had been guarded by Roman soldiers to make sure that no funny business went on. If they deserted their posts or fell asleep the punishment for them was execution. As Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle’s great fictional detective, Sherlock Holmes, put it “When you have eliminated all which is impossible, then whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.” In other words, Jesus did exactly what He said He would do and rose again to life from death.

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# Peter and John are equally unsure as to what has happened and so they go to see for themselves. Both of them run there, with John arriving slightly ahead of Peter. We are told that Peter went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths lying on the ground discarded, and the face cloth more carefully rolled up. We are not, however, told what Peter concludes from the evidence. Does he know what has happened? Does he have suspicions? John simply does not tell us. He does, though, tell us that when he entered the tomb, he saw the cloths and believed that Jesus had risen from the dead.

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# Three witnesses, and three different responses! In a sense, the different interpretations of the empty tomb represent the three most common views today about what happened on that first Easter Sunday. Some people, like Mary, see the evidence and hear the Gospel accounts, but decide that there must be a natural explanation to it all. Dead people cannot come back to life and so Jesus could not have been raised. Others, like Peter, just don’t know what to make of it. They have all the information, but they’re still confused about what to think.

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# A few, however, like John, hear the Gospel accounts, review the evidence and with the help of the Holy Spirit they believe. Despite the unprecedented nature of resurrection from the dead, God has revealed to them that this is exactly what has happened. It’s what He promised through the prophets hundreds of years before, and it’s also what the Lord Jesus said would happen too. Thankfully, though, both Mary and Peter saw the risen Lord for themselves and came to believe. What do we believe today? Do we believe that Jesus is the Son of God who died on the cross that our sins might be forgiven? Do we believe that He was raised again to life on the third day, victorious over sin and death? Have we believed on Him and entered into eternal life?

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we thank You that no one is beyond Your ability and desire to be saved by grace through faith in Christ Jesus Your Son. Thank You that You are ready and willing to use anyone whose heart is open towards You. Increase our longing and love for You and help us to live by faith and not by sight. Thank You that Your Word is altogether true and trustworthy and prevent us from being influenced by the circumstances that surround us rather than looking to Jesus and trusting Your Word. Thank You that we have been born anew and placed into Your eternal family. Look down in compassion and grace on those who are lost and bring many more into Your kingdom. This we pray for Christ's sake, amen.

**Benediction**

Now, may the God of peace, who brought back again from the dead our Lord Jesus, equip us with all we need for doing His will. May He produce in us, through the power of Jesus Christ, all that is pleasing to Him. To Him be glory forever and ever, amen!