**Home Service Sheet For 7th April 2024**

**Call to Worship: Psalm 134:1-3**

Come, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord,

    who stand by night in the house of the Lord!

Lift up your hands to the holy place

    and bless the Lord!

May the Lord bless you from Zion,

    he who made heaven and earth!

**Prayer**

Almighty God, who through Your one and only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, overcame sin and death we worship You. Through His sacrificial death and resurrection You opened up to us the gate of everlasting life, and for that we thank You. Grant that we, who have been adopted into Your family through Your Son, may be raised to life again with Him at the final day through the power of Your Holy Spirit. Help us today to be filled with awe and gratitude in reading about the resurrection of Your Son. In His Name we pray, amen.

**Hymn And can it be by Charles Wesley**

<https://youtu.be/ewTa1LgKI4A?si=31yb0qFUfE7Xz6q7>

And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour’s blood?

Died He for me, who caused His pain? For me, who Him to death pursued?

Amazing love! How can it be that Thou, my God, should die for me?

Amazing love! how can it be that Thou, my God, should die for me!

He left His Father’s throne above, so free, so infinite His grace;

Emptied Himself to show His love, and bled for Adam’s helpless race.

‘Tis mercy all, immense and free; for O my God, it found out me.

‘Tis mercy all, immense and free; for O my God, it found out me.

Long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature’s night;

Thine eye diffused a quickening ray, I woke, the dungeon flamed with light.

My chains fell off, my heart was free; I rose, went forth and followed Thee.

My chains fell off, my heart was free; I rose, went forth and followed Thee.

No condemnation now I dread; Jesus, and all in Him is mine!

Alive in Him, my living Head, and clothed in righteousness divine;

Bold I approach the eternal throne and claim the crown through Christ, my own.

Bold I approach the eternal throne and claim the crown through Christ, my own.

**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 20:11-18**

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**

Last week we considered the responses of 3 of Jesus’ followers to the empty tomb and took time to reflect on our own responses to the good news of Jesus’ resurrection. Our Bible reading today carries straight on from that, but the focus has shifted back to Mary. Last week we left her thinking that someone had removed Jesus’ body from the tomb, but now we find her back there in the midst of her grief and sorrow. Peter and John have already been inside the tomb and seen the discarded grave cloths, but Mary has not been inside. Instead, John tells us that she stooped down to look inside. When she looked in, she saw more than the grave cloths, though, she saw two angels, who appeared bright white and spoke to her.

“Woman, why are you weeping?” they asked Mary. I don’t think this means that they didn’t understand her sorrow, but rather this was them leading her to a correct understanding of what had really happened. She replied, saying “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” This is very similar to what she said to Peter and John earlier in the chapter and shows that she is still confused. The angels do not say anything further to her, but for some reason Mary turns around and sees a figure in front of her. She naturally thinks that this man is perhaps a gardener, although quite what he would be doing there at such an early time of day isn’t known. Mary wonders whether he is the one who has taken Jesus’ body away and asks him where the body has been put.

Even after hearing Jesus’ voice she does not recognise that it is the Lord who is stood there in front of her in this garden. It is only when Jesus addresses her by name in verse 16 that her eyes are opened and she recognises that this man is in fact the risen Lord Jesus. Some scholars suggest that her lack of recognition could be due to Jesus’ resurrection body being different from His previous human body. There are certainly some differences that become apparent in the Gospel accounts, such as His ability to walk through walls and disappear at will. However, another possibility exists, and that is simply that Mary did not expect to see Jesus and was blinded by her own grief. Ultimately it doesn’t really matter.

What truly matters is the fact that Jesus was alive and risen from the dead, victorious over sin, death and hell. His body was still physical too, as His feet could be held on to (Matthew 28:9) and He ate fish (Luke 24:41-43). In other words, Jesus was neither a ghost nor a vision, but was rather a resurrected God-man. Mary, now realising that it is the Lord Jesus standing before her, responds by saying, “Rabboni”. The literal translation of this word is ‘my teacher’. Finally, Mary has begun to understand what has really happened. Jesus has been raised back to life and is here in front of her. Did she fully understand the implications of the resurrection at this point? Probably not, but her eyes and heart were open and ready to learn.

Jesus’ words to Mary in verse 17 are a little odd. He said, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father;” On the face of it, what He says makes sense, but why should Mary not cling to Jesus? Is this request about physical holding on, or is it metaphorical? Perhaps Jesus is telling Mary that He still has other things He needs to do in the next little while before He ascends to His Father in heaven. Certainly this is true, and could explain these words. It could also be that Jesus wants Mary to understand that He will not remain physically here on Earth, but rather He will be going back to the Father, when He will then send His Holy Spirit to dwell in all who believe in Him. Again, this understanding is possible and would make sense.

Jesus goes on to give Mary a commission to tell the disciples that He is now risen from the dead and will soon be as ending to His Father in heaven. Note how Jesus refers to “my Father and your Father” and “my God and your God.” Behind this simple sentence is a deep and wonderful theological truth. Through our Lord Jesus Christ and through faith in Him we are all adopted into His family. We are adopted brothers of the Lord Jesus, sons and daughters of the Heavenly Father who raised Jesus from the dead. This is one of the amazing results of Jesus’ resurrection. Not only can we be forgiven if our sin and enter into eternal life, but we are adopted into God’s family. Amen!

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank You for Jesus. Thank You that He died to pay the price for the sins of all who would believe in Him. We also thank You that He rose again so that we might have His abundant, resurrected life within us, in the Person of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Lord, we recognise that we are not, and could never be, worthy to gather up the crumbs of grace mercy under Your table. Yet, O Lord, You stooped down to rescue us and adopt us into Your heavenly family. Empower and embolden us to share this wondrous Gospel message with the people with whom we live, work and meet day by day. To You be all praise and glory forever and ever, amen.

**Benediction**

All praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Source of all grace and mercy, the God of all consolation. May we not rely on ourselves alone but trust in You for life and salvation. You alone are the God who can raise the dead to life again, and we are confident that You will also deliver us at the day of judgement! Amen!