

Parish of Central Exeter
Easter Day 4th April 2021

A day to remember.

Welcome everyone.

It was early in the morning. Still dark.
The dawn just starting to cut through the fog.
The air hung heavy with expectation, as if the earth itself were holding its breath.

The echoes of the cross linger. His voice still rings out:
It Is Finished. Into your hands I commit my spirit.

The story comes to us in pieces and fragments, hints and images:

A vineyard garden, grapes ready for the harvest.

A stone, rolled away.

Preparing for worship

We gather:
a community of faith in God's subversive world.
We gather to celebrate
that no darkness can extinguish light,
to remember
that love will always be more powerful than death,
and to trust that
peace will always be stronger than violence.

We gather,
people of faith in the light of God's world.
Welcome to worship.

(written by Cheryl Lawrie and posted on [hold this space])

Gathering Hymn

'Alleluia, alleluia, Give thanks to the risen Lord.' In this version we have a trumpet interspersed with the singing to give a glorious and triumphant start to the service. Words and music are on the screen – so you can sing along too!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6f9pH_yioGE



Call to Confession

Christ has risen
and we have risen to new life with him.
Yet we must confess the ways we have
continued to remain in our tombs of sin and death.

Prayer of Confession

Living Lord,
when we stand before the empty tomb
we don't always feel the joy of resurrection.
We feel fear, doubt, and distrust.
We feel empty.

Forgive the fear that paralyzes us at the brink of new life.
Forgive our doubt of your love.
Forgive our distrust of your surprising, joyous plan.
Fill our emptiness with your glorious light.
Raise us to abundant new life
for the glory of your name.

Words of Assurance

Wake up, sleeper!
Rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.

Sisters and brothers,
Christ has forgiven our sins.
Christ calls us to new life.
Christ will lead us into righteousness.

Amen.

(written by Greg Scheer, <http://www.gregscheer.com/>)

Alternative collect for Easter Day

God of glory,
by the raising of your Son
you have broken the chains of death and hell:
fill your Church with faith and hope;
for a new day has dawned
and the way to life stands open
in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Worship music

Jesus, remember me. A simple chant from Taizé using the words of one of the other two men being crucified at the same time as Jesus.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YjLZKR3c98&t=61s>

Readings, some brief comments and prayers – a time for (quiet) reflection.

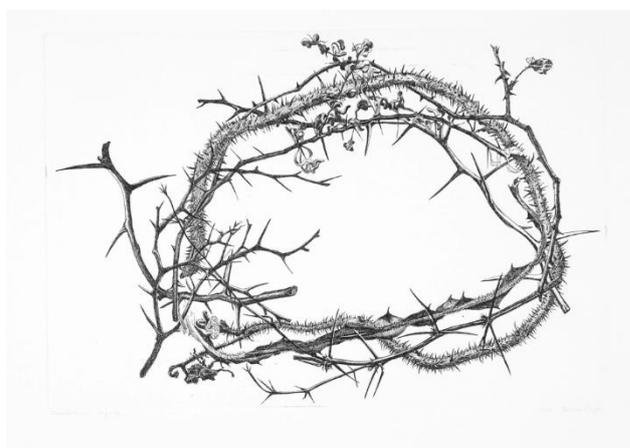
First Reading. Jesus is condemned to death. Luke 23: 13-24

¹³ Then Pilate called together the leading priests and other religious leaders, along with the people, ¹⁴ and he announced his verdict. “You brought this man to me, accusing him of leading a revolt. I have examined him thoroughly on this point in your presence and find him innocent. ¹⁵ Herod came to the same conclusion and sent him back to us. Nothing this man has done calls for the death penalty. ¹⁶ So I will have him flogged, and then I will release him.”^[a]

¹⁸ Then a mighty roar rose from the crowd, and with one voice they shouted, “Kill him, and release Barabbas to us!” ¹⁹ (Barabbas was in prison for taking part in an insurrection in Jerusalem against the government, and for murder.) ²⁰ Pilate argued with them, because he wanted to release Jesus. ²¹ But they kept shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

²² For the third time he demanded, “Why? What crime has he committed? I have found no reason to sentence him to death. So I will have him flogged, and then I will release him.”

²³ But the mob shouted louder and louder, demanding that Jesus be crucified, and their voices prevailed. ²⁴ So Pilate sentenced Jesus to die as they demanded.





Jesus before Pilate. He Qi, 2007

Reflective Prayer

What was it about Jesus
that was so confusing for governments
and for ordinary people?

Pilate couldn't make sense of Jesus
and half the time we can't either.

We want a God who comes in might and power to take all before him
and yet we get Jesus:
unmistakably human and vulnerable,
trouble-maker
peace-lover,
political subversive
always on the side of love, not power
human, even to the point of death.

We keep asking the question,
'God, who are you?'
in the hope we'll get a different answer.
And God just keeps coming back with this one.

(written by Cheryl Lawrie and posted on [hold this space])

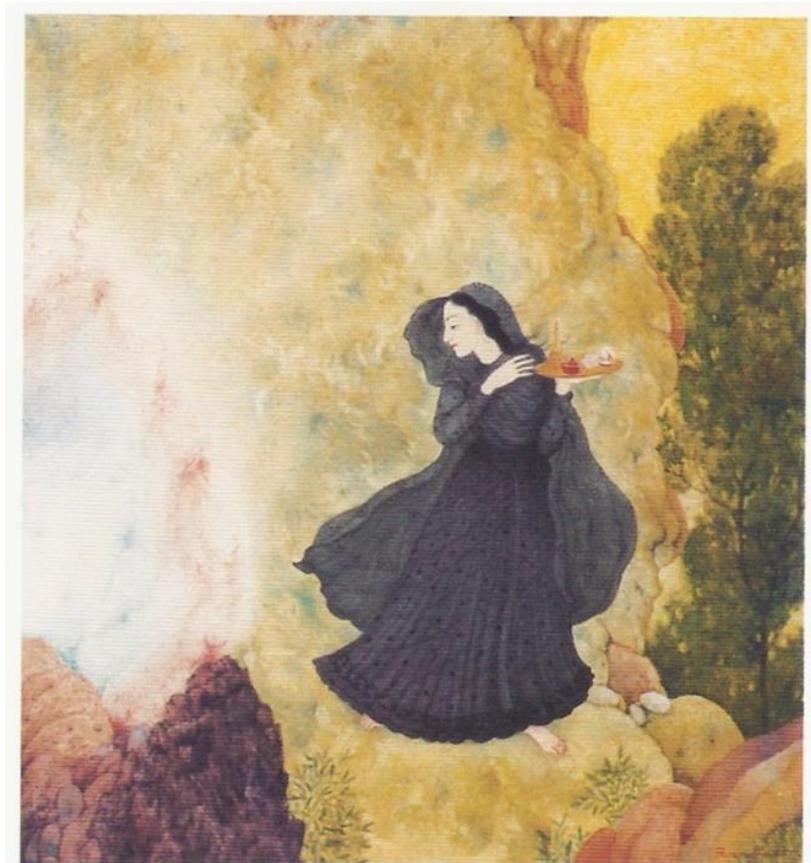
Second Reading Mark 16: 1-8 At the tomb

16 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. ²Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb ³and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

⁴But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. ⁵As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

⁶"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

⁸Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.



Frank Wesley (Indian, 1923–2002),
Mary at the Tomb, (painted before 1993)

Reactions

He is risen?

The first reactions on Easter Day were not joy but alarm and fear. That is hardly surprising. The last thing the women were expecting was the tomb to be open. Their world shrank to just one question – what had happened?

Resurrection would not have been their first answer, and most likely not their second either. There were other possibilities, which at first sight seemed more plausible -someone else had been their first.

When the news arrived amongst the disciples the puzzlement continued. Only the entry into their meeting room of Jesus himself– similar yet different, able to disregard the standard rules of space and time – made them start to consider this extra-ordinary conclusion.

Affirmation

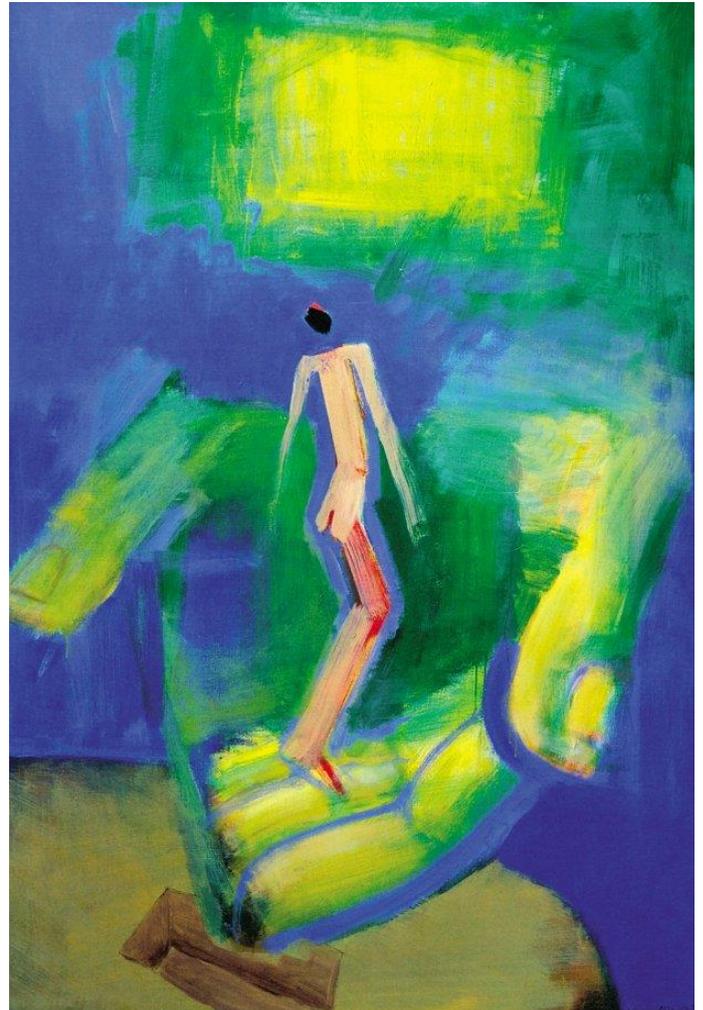
Lord of Easter you overturned the tables in the Temple, you overturned the conventions of the day, you overturned the results of disease and injury, and finally you overturned death.

He is risen? He is risen indeed!

Prayer

Evolving spirit of God,
you bring about powerful reversals
in the world and in our lives.
The mystery of your created universe is
a constant reminder
of the ways you create and re-create
through cycles of death and new life,
through change and fresh beginnings.

Resurrection by Arne Sørensen,
a living Danish artist



Third Reading Luke 24:44-48 Jesus explains the context of his resurrection.

⁴⁴ Then Jesus said, "When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ And he said, "Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. ⁴⁷ It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: 'There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.' ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of all these things.

Brief comment

But resurrection is more than just an interesting and extraordinary explanation of the events of Easter Day. Jesus needed more time to interpret his resurrection to the disciples, and they needed even more time to work out the implications in their lives and that of the believing community. It is still a concept that is open to different interpretations, not just about the mechanics of what happened, but also how the nature of our belief in it becomes integrated into our understanding of how it is part of God's purpose, and into our life.

Prayer

Holy God,
We are caught in the tension of
light and shadow, death and resurrection.

You spoke the world into being,
you illuminated the universe by your very speech,
then filled the void with life.
Indeed, you have filled the void
of darkness and death,
the empty promises of the abyss,
with new life and new creation.

We look to you in the space between the world and the Kingdom,
longing for the fulfilment of your word
in the work of the Holy Spirit
and the reign of Christ, our Creator and King.
Amen

(written by Thomas Turner, and posted on everyday liturgy.)



The Resurrection of Jesus by Mikola Sarić, a contemporary Serbian artist. (2017)

Worship Song

'Now the Green blade riseth' sung here by Alena Hemingway. Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B92qRLMEK-c>

Intercessions

God of life and death, beginnings and endings,
we pause to remember the power of those in charge to run the world.

Today we remember the many people near and far who are broken by that power:
those who live in places where peace is just a word,
not a reality, not even a dream;
those who are pushed to the margins
because of their race, their gender, their bank balance,
their marital status, their orientation,
or any of the countless other ways we find to set people apart;
those who live with nothing so that others may live with abundance;
those who choose to challenge the injustices in their world
and are crushed beneath the feet of those in charge.

Lord have mercy,
Christ have mercy

Today we think of all those things that are stopped before they come to fruition,
of hopes crushed beneath reality's heavy foot,
of promises left unfulfilled,
of possibilities that leave us wondering....

Lord have mercy,
Christ have mercy

...time of silent prayer...

But even as we remember that power,
we remember that day follows night,
hope replaces despair,
and life will conquer death.

Help us remember that every ending is a new beginning,
even if in the depths of The End
we have no way of seeing what that new beginning might be.

We pray in the name of the one who showed us
the depth of his passion for Your Kingdom,
who taught us to live in love and justice,
in whose life, death and resurrection we can find the path to Kingdom living.

(posted by Rev Gord on his blog, Worship Offerings.)

The Lord's Prayer

We now have the Swahili version of the Lord's Prayer (Baba Yetu) – as glorious and exciting a version as you can find – we have used it before. Sung by the University of Stellenbosch Choir.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCa8RxaOPW8>

Affirmation

And because He is risen
My eyes see possibilities
And my heart hears hope
Like a whisper on the wind.
And the song that rises in me
Will not be silenced,
As life disrupts
This shadowed place of death
Like a butterfly under the skin,
And death itself
Runs terrified to hide
Because He is risen.

(Extract from a longer piece by Gerard Kelly in "Spoken Worship." Posted on Third Space.)

The Peace

If alone, smile and hug yourself (God does). If otherwise, share the Peace as appropriate.

A short Spiritual Communion

The Book of Common Prayer reminds us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly 'eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ', even when we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves.

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

O God,
help me to trust you,
help me to know that you are with me,
help me to believe that nothing
can separate me from your love
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



An offertory prayer

We may not be in church, but we can still offer ourselves and our talents to God.

Blessed are you, God and creator of the universe,
as we offer you our activities, thanksgivings and our life.
We present ourselves, and our world, as we are and as you can make us,
for everything in heaven and on earth is yours,
and of your own do we give you. Blessed be God for ever.

Because there is no Breaking and Sharing we can have only Spiritual Communion with Christ. I'm sure you can find a way to use a few minutes of silence or conversation to enjoy this, and make it a sacramental moment. You may like to listen to: 'Christ has no body now, but yours', sung here by the Exultate Singers. Words are attributed to St Teresa of Avilla.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zoV6R6gk4vY>



Giving thanks for Christ's death and resurrection you may wish to say

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

Post Communion Collect

God of Life,
who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son
to the death of the cross,
and by his glorious resurrection
have delivered us from the power of our enemy:
grant us so to die daily to sin,
that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his risen life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Easter Commission and Benediction

have you ever noticed
that it is the space that holds everything we believe
it is the gap
the lacuna
the void
in which we place everything we fundamentally believe

in that space
the emptiness
of tombs
lies the fullness of our faith

and in such spaces
we believe

when the void is found
the emptiness of the tomb is met
it is then we trust resurrection
and that what Jesus said
is true
we remember what he told us
and believe

it's kind of obvious that you need
an empty tomb for resurrection
but you need that emptiness
to have a full faith
filled with hope
and possibility
and what might be

so may we step into this emptiness
and believe
the life Jesus spoke of might be true
the love he held to might be true
the words he spoke might be true
because there is only space
where death ought to be

this possibility of life
this resurrection of spirit
in every empty space
is our new hope

go and believe into the void. *(written by Roddy Hamilton)*

Blessing

May the truth of Easter
The joy of Easter
And the blessings of Easter
Be with us this day and all days
Amen

Closing Music

We close with a quieter piece of music: 'God So Loved the World', music by John Stainer, and sung here by the Exeter University Chapel Choir. The Biblical verse is well known!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Ju-LdO-48>

*Today's service has been put together by Keith.
Material taken or adapted from other websites has an
attribution made where possible.*

*Verrijzenis (Resurrection) by Paul
van Dongen, a Dutch artist. 2007*

