

Easter Sunday Year A

Matthew 28:1-20

Opening Prayer

Praise God from whom all blessings flow
praise God all creatures here below
for on this day of joy and gladness
Christ is risen from death and sadness!
Praise with hands and voices singing
praise with verse and chorus ringing
Christ the Lord is risen today
He is the Truth, the Life, the Way!

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Hymn: The Broken Heart

*Low in the grave he lay, Jesus my Savior,
waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord!*

Refrain:

*Up from the grave he arose;
with a mighty triumph o'er his foes;
he arose a victor from the dark domain,
and he lives forever, with his saints to reign.
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!*

*Death cannot keep its prey, Jesus my Savior;
he tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord! [Refrain]*


Robert Lowry 1874

*Vainly they watch his bed, Jesus my Savior,
vainly they seal the dead, Jesus my Lord! [Refrain]*

Window of Wonder

**A Sonnet for Easter Dawn
by Malcolm Guite**

He blesses every love which weeps and grieves
And now he blesses hers who stood and wept
And would not be consoled, or leave her love's
Last touching place, but watched as low light crept
Up from the east. A sound behind her stirs
A scatter of bright birdsong through the air.



She turns, but cannot focus through her tears,
Or recognise the Gardener standing there.
She hardly hears his gentle question 'Why,
Why are you weeping?', or sees the play of light
That brightens as she chokes out her reply
'They took my love away, my day is night'
And then she hears her name, she hears Love say
The Word that turns her night, and ours, to Day.

Creative response:

You may like to be listening for moments of divine comfort this Easter week.

Closing Prayer

Christ has risen!
Christ has risen indeed.

Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great Pastor of the church, even our Lord Jesus Christ, make you strong to do your best in every good thing, working in you that which is delightful in God's eyes.

Amen!

Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again.

The grace of the resurgent Jesus Christ, the love of the never-weary God, and the fellowship of the dynamic Holy Spirit, will be with you always.

Amen!

Bruce Prewer

Devotion - Easter Sunday

As we approach the joy and hope of Easter Sunday, the Gospel of Matthew tells us the Easter Sunday story in three movements.

In the first movement of verses 1-10, several features which are unique to Matthew, continue. The Gospel of Matthew is the only Gospel that says two women named Mary came to the tomb of Jesus early at dawn, showing Matthew's focus on having two witnesses. It was the first day of the week, and in this way, it reflects the first day of creation, when God had ordered light to shine out of darkness.

And so for Matthew, a new light and beginning begins to arise on this day. An of the Angel of the Lord, blinding in appearance, rolls back the big stone, and even mockingly sits upon it, as God's own seal of his presence, approval, and power! At this, the soldiers were so terrified, that they shook, and became like dead men. The seal that represented imperial authority and the finality of death has been removed and even made into a chair.

God delights to roll away stones of difficulty and of death from our lives, no matter what that might be. I well remember our daughter Cathy when she was sick with cancer saying to me on Resurrection morning of 2020, that she felt her bed shake as she reflected on this day.

The angel instructed the women. They are told to not be afraid, they were to tell the other disciples that Jesus was going ahead of them into Galilee, and there they would see him. This instruction, which appears only in the Gospel of Matthew, can be seen as fulfilling a prophecy from Book of Isaiah (9:1–2), which Matthew also quotes earlier (Matthew 4:15–16). The passage says that the people living in darkness in places like Zebulun, Naphtali, and Galilee would see a great light. Matthew suggests that this prophecy is fulfilled through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Just as light appeared on the first day of creation, the light of Jesus' resurrection is now beginning to shine on the whole world.

Then as the women left to do this very thing, afraid, yet filled with joy, suddenly Jesus met them, and greeted them. This order of events is significant for Matthew. Jesus makes himself known to us, along the path of obedience and tells us to go ahead and tell the others, that he will meet them too.

The second movement is in verses 11-15 where the chief priests and elders refuse to believe all that the guards had seen and witnessed, and in its place they bribed the soldiers with a large sum of money to tell a false story about all that had happened, in order to save their own skins before the governor. But was this any better than Judas trying to live with his thirty pieces of silver? In their private moments, and to themselves, I can imagine the bribed soldiers saying, "But do you want to know what really happened?"

Finally, in the third movement, Jesus appears to his disciples in Galilee in verses 16-20. For Matthew, this is the true and ultimate extension of Jesus' resurrection. Here Jesus leaves his disciples with three words. First, he assured them of his power and authority – "All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to me" – Jesus now held the keys to life and death. Secondly, Jesus gives us a commission. Go and tell. Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. Thirdly, and finally, Jesus promises us the great seal and promise of his presence "And surely I am with you always, even to the very end of the age". May Jesus who is with us always, meet you along the road today and remind you that he has the keys to life and the power to remove stones of fear and death. Amen.

Rev Dr Ted Woods.



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