

April 26, 2020, Easter 3

Parts of this service marked with an asterisk () may be led by one person.*

Invocation

* Two people travelling, feeling sad.

Feeling confused. Feeling overwhelmed.

Two people discovering that the impossible... has already taken place.

And everything is new.

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Hymn *(Read or sung together)*

(Hymn lyrics printed by permission the author, Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, © 2020)

This Easter celebration is not like ones we've known.

We pray in isolation, we sing the hymns alone.

We're distant from our neighbours — from worship leaders, too.

No flowers grace the chancel to set a festive mood.

No gathered choirs are singing; no banners lead the way.

O God of love and promise, where's joy this Easter Day?

With sanctuaries empty, may homes become the place
we ponder resurrection and celebrate your grace.

Our joy won't come from worship that's in a crowded room
but from the news of women who saw the empty tomb.

Our joy comes from disciples who ran with haste to see —
who heard that Christ is risen, and then, by grace, believed.

In all the grief and suffering, may we remember well:
Christ suffered crucifixion and faced the powers of hell.
Each Easter bears the promise: Christ rose that glorious day!
Now nothing in creation can keep your love away.

We thank you that on Easter, your church is blessed to be
a scattered, faithful body that's doing ministry.
In homes and in the places of help and healing, too,
we live the Easter message by gladly serving you.

For those of you reading this on line, an instrumental version of this hymn may be heard by clicking here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nr7rbeMAmN8>

Prayer of the Day (*Prayer used by permission of Augsburg Fortress*)

* Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Let us pray.

O God, your Son makes himself known to all his disciples in the breaking of the bread. Open the eyes of our faith, that we may see him in his redeeming work, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Gospel Reading

* The Holy Gospel according to Luke.

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' He asked them, 'What things?'

They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.'

Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection

* I miss Communion.

I miss gathering with you to sing and read and pray. I miss hearing the story of the night in which Jesus was betrayed. I miss the bread and the wine. I miss saying those gospel words, “For you,” to you. I miss hearing those words *from* you.

And now we hear this glorious resurrection story about Jesus breaking bread with two members of his community, and how their eyes were opened, and how they recognized him in the breaking of the bread, and how they immediately left the table as it was and ran back to the city to tell the others about recognizing him *in* the breaking of their bread.

It just “gets me in right the feels.”

But in the middle of all of this poignancy, I need to remember something important.

The meal that Jesus was eating with these distraught followers was **not** Communion. It was *not* the Passover. It was not the same as when Jesus gathered with his disciples in the upper room.

This was just supper. It was an ordinary “sit down” with travelling companions. There was no liturgy; there were no grand, sweeping stories of God’s actions for God’s people; there was no massive retelling of the story of God’s creation.

There were simply three travellers who sat down to chew some bread together.

And you and I are still chewing bread these days!

Granted, it’s not the same. And sure, we all long for that day when we can gather again, and sing and pray and hear again, and eat and drink again, and hear “For you,” again.

But if the risen Jesus could show up in Emmaus, with ordinary people, in an ordinary meal, and show them who he was, why can’t Jesus do that in First South? Or Rose Bay? Or Feltzen South? Or Lunenburg? Or anywhere else for that matter?

Even at your kitchen table.

And even at mine.

It’s not that Communion doesn’t matter. It matters tremendously! It’s just that Jesus is not limited to our church buildings and altars. Nor is he limited to a “special” meal. Nor is he limited to a backwater province of the Roman Empire, 2,000 years ago.

Even if all we can do is stand still, looking sad, Jesus can and does meet us *right here*, with welcome, with love and with life.

Even in an ordinary meal, like the one you and I are about to eat.

Because Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Amen.

Prayers of the People

* Celebrating the victory of love over death, we offer our prayers to God.

[*Short pause*]

God who comes in bread, you sustain life through the most basic of foods. Show us your risen presence in the basics of life. Make our hearts burn within us. God of Easter,

Hear our prayer.

God who comes in wine, you enrich life in community and celebration. Show us how to live together, even as we struggle with our current realities. Make our hearts burn within us. God of Easter,

Hear our prayer.

God who comes in story, you remind us who we are through familiar words, and through the unfamiliar drama of our lives. Open our hearts to the story you are telling us, the story of which we are a part, the story you are composing for the sake of creation. Make our hearts burn within us. God of Easter,

Hear our prayer.

God who comes in sadness, your presence is promised most profoundly when we are hurting, when we are overwhelmed, when we see no way through. Reassure us that you *do* walk with us in our difficult days; give us faith when we lose hope. Make our hearts burn within us. God of Easter,

Hear our prayer.

God who comes in illness, we remember those who are sick, those whose health is compromised, those who are facing death. We also remember those who are serving them in their pain and isolation.

[Names of those who are of special concern may be offered.]

May we all support each other as we embrace the ministry of healing to which you call us. Make our hearts burn within us. God of Easter,

Hear our prayer.

God who comes in the ordinary, free us from looking for you only in the special or the extraordinary. Free us to encounter you in the everyday. Make our hearts burn within us, even now. God of Easter,

Hear our prayer.

We pray this in the name of our risen and living Saviour, Jesus the Christ, who taught us to pray,
Our Father....

Lord's Prayer (*Prayer used by permission of Augsburg Fortress*)

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 who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

OR

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are your, now and forever. Amen.

OR

To pray with the leaders of our local congregations, you may click here -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5D7r99aSnzg>

Hymn *(Read or sung together)*

(Hymn lyrics printed under OneLicence # 11411292)

We are baptized in Christ Jesus, we are baptized in his death,
that as Christ is raised victorious, we might live a brand new life.
And if we have been united in a dreadful death like his,
we shall all be reunited, for he lives.

In the water and the witness, in the breaking of the bread,
in the waiting arms of Jesus who is risen from the dead,
God has made a new beginning from the ashes of our past;
in the losing and the winning we hold fast.

Glory be to God the Father, glory be to God the Son,
glory to the Holy Spirit, ever three and ever one,
as it was in the beginning, glory now resounds again
in a song that has no ending. Amen.

For those of you reading this on line, this hymn may be heard by clicking here -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKQJJ6xz1K0>

Benediction *(Read together)*

May almighty God,
The Father who created us to live in love,
The Son (†) who died and rose to bring us new life,
And the Spirit who lights our hearts on fire,
bless us all, now and forever. Amen.

Go in peace.

Thanks be to God!

For Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!