

All Saints, Grayswood

EASTER SUNDAY



Easter Celebration

Sunday 12th April 2020

A candle is lit

May the light of Christ, rising in glory,
banish all darkness from our hearts and minds.

The Lord be with you
All **and also with you.**
Alleluia. Christ is risen!
All **He is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

Hymn - Jesus Christ is risen today

Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia!
Our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!
Who did once, upon the cross, Alleluia!
Suffer to redeem our loss, Alleluia!

Hymns of praise then let us sing, Alleluia!
Unto Christ, our heavenly King, Alleluia!
Who endured the cross and grave, Alleluia!
Sinners to redeem and save, Alleluia!

But the pain which He endured, Alleluia!
Our salvation hath procured, Alleluia!
Now above the sky He's king, Alleluia!
Where the angels ever sing, Alleluia!

Sing we to our God above, Alleluia!
Praise eternal as His love, Alleluia!
Praise Him, all you heavenly host, Alleluia!
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Alleluia!

We have failed in loving and giving, and so we say to God:

**Most merciful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned
in thought and word and deed.
We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
In your mercy, forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be;
that we may do justly, love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God. Amen.**

May the God of love and power
forgive you and free you from your sins,
heal and strengthen you by his Spirit
and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen**

The 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. Amen**

First Reading: Acts 10. 34-43

THE PRIEST, THE GUARD AND THE EMPTY TOMB

A CHIEF PRIEST, BRISK, IMPATIENT AND DISMISSIVE, AND A
ROMAN

GUARD, A SIMPLE MAN CHOOSING HIS WORDS CAREFULLY.

PRIEST

Yes, quickly, what is it?

GUARD

Ah, your worshipness - sorry, I'm not sure how to address a chief priest.

PRIEST

You're a Roman guard, you shouldn't be addressing me at all. What do you want?

GUARD

I've just been on duty at the tomb.

PRIEST

What tomb?

GUARD

The tomb you asked me to guard?

PRIEST

Oh, that tomb, yes. And?

GUARD

Well .. We have a bit of a situation, I'm afraid.

PRIEST

They haven't started a vigil, have they?

GUARD

No.

PRIEST

The last thing we need is them turning it into a shrine. What, then - has someone broken into it?

GUARD

No, we never took our eye off it.

PRIEST

Good, because if some lunatic gets hold of the corpse we'll have bones popping up all over the place and holy toe nails on every street corner.

GUARD

Yes indeed.

PRIEST

So - no fanatics, no one's gone in or out. What's happened?

GUARD

No one's 'gone in', certainly .. but someone may have 'come out'.

PRIEST

Explain please?

GUARD

The tomb is open and he's gone.

PRIEST

Who's gone?

GUARD

The prisoner.

PRIEST

(GETTING IMPATIENT) The prisoner's dead, Sergeant. He hasn't gone anywhere. You mean the prisoner's body?

GUARD

Yes, if you like.

PRIEST

No! I don't like! .. So, who's taken it - grave robbers?

GUARD

Not possible. We'd have seen them.

PRIEST

Who, then?

GUARD

I don't know.

PRIEST

Look, is it me or is it you, because one of us is not making sense. Now, watch my lips and listen carefully: Do you know... what has happened .. to the body of the dead Galilean?

GUARD

Yes sir, I do.

PRIEST

Excellent. What?

GUARD

It's gone missing.

PAUSE. THE PRIEST SIGHS.

PRIEST

(AS IF TO A CHILD) Right, let's try again, shall we? Simply and in your own words, tell me what happened.

GUARD

We rolled the stone across and put the governor's seal on it.

PRIEST

Yes?

GUARD

I posted eight men at the entrance, and we kept watch throughout the night.

PRIEST

Yes?

GUARD

No one came or went and the place remained quiet.

PRIEST

Yes?

GUARD

Until dawn.

PRIEST

And?

GUARD

We had an earth tremor. Quite severe.

PRIEST

I know. We felt it here in the city. So what?

GUARD

Well, the men took cover because there were rocks and debris flying everywhere, and then I saw that the stone had moved and the entrance was open.

PRIEST

So? The tremor must have shifted it.

GUARD

Exactly. And I was about to inspect it when the family turned up and created a scene.

PRIEST

What sort of scene?

GUARD

They tried to get in to the tomb.

PRIEST

Did you stop them?

GUARD

We were about to when some joker appeared from nowhere, climbed onto the stone and told them he'd gone.

PRIEST

Who'd gone?

GUARD

The prisoner.

PRIEST

You mean the prisoner's body.

GUARD

Yes.

PRIEST

Did you arrest him?

GUARD

What, the prisoner's body?

PRIEST

(EXASPERATED) No, the joker, you idiot!

GUARD

No, he .. well, he just disappeared, to be honest. The women were hysterical and ran off and we were left with an empty tomb.

PRIEST

Wonderful. And this is the army that's conquered half the world?

GUARD

So, as you see, we have a bit of a situation.

PRIEST

No, Sergeant. I don't have a situation, you do. You'd better report to whoever and tell them that the followers stole the body.

GUARD

But they didn't.

PRIEST

Of course they did.

GUARD

We'd have seen them, and anyway, how would I explain that to my superiors?

PRIEST

(EXASPERATED) I don't know! Tell them you fell asleep?

GUARD

Fell asleep?! What do you think we are - amateurs?

PRIEST

Yes?

GUARD

Do you know how unprofessional that is?

PRIEST

Well .. let's see ... this unprofessional?

GUARD

What's that?

PRIEST

Common people call it money, I believe.

GUARD

Is this a bribe?

PRIEST

Yes.

GUARD

You're paying me to lie?

PRIEST

No, I'm paying you to come up with an explanation. Would you mind?

GUARD

Yes. I'm rather attached to my head and sleeping at your post is punishable by death.

PRIEST

You don't have to worry about that, the governor owes me a favour. Trust me, his followers will be hunted down, their lives will be threatened, and the moment that happens - someone will produce the rotting corpse. All right?

GUARD

And if they don't?

PRIEST

They will. All that's required of you, is that you own up to nodding off. Could you do that? One small sacrifice for the good of many?

GUARD

You don't think we should find out what actually happened?

PRIEST

What for?

GUARD

The truth?

PRIEST

My dear ignorant man, the last thing we need is people digging around for the truth. What we need is a plausible explanation so we can all get on with our lives, and you can go home to your delightful wife and your ghastly children. Now, if there's nothing else, I have a flock in need of a shepherd. Good day to you.

BRIEF PAUSE

GUARD

(CALLING AFTER HIM) Maybe he did!

PRIEST

(CALLING BACK) Maybe who did what!?

GUARD

He said he would!

BRIEF PAUSE

PRIEST

What, come back to life? Ha! .. (CLOSER AGAIN. PATRONISING.)
I tell you what, Sergeant. If he starts appearing in people's homes or
chatting to friends on the street or having barbecue's on the beach,
you be sure to let me know. Until then let's just keep it real, shall
we?

GUARD

I'd like to see your face if he does.

PRIEST

If he does, Sergeant, it will be over my dead body so you won't see
my face at all - it will be buried with the rest of me and smiling at
eternity. Good day to you.

THE END

When it comes to the resurrection of Christ, it is tempting to try
and rationalise something that is, by definition, not rational or
explainable at all, except theologically. In fact, I would go further
and suggest that this bedrock moment at the heart of the
Christian faith is literally and paradoxically incredible - beyond
belief.

Which is rather the point. It's a mystery - and if we try to reduce it to something less, something manageable with a tidy explanation, then we miss its power and profundity altogether. Worse still, we make God smaller than He is.

I based the brief and mischievous dialogue that follows on a few intriguing verses in the last chapter of Matthew's gospel where a Roman guard in charge of Jesus' tomb, having reported a 'slight problem' overnight with the missing body, is offered a bribe to keep his mouth shut. I love these bizarre and detailed fragments one finds in scripture mainly because they have the distinct smell of authenticity about them.

Enjoy - and Happy Easter everyone!
Richard Everett.

The Gospel Reading: Matthew 28 1-10

Hear the Gospel of the Lord according to N

All **Glory to you O Lord.**

At the end the reader says:

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon

Well - I'm not going to forget my first Easter being in charge at All Saints am I!

Nothing in my training prepared me for the situation we find ourselves in today. I do wonder if anything will be added to the Ordinands training programme in the future? I'm sure how to use technology will certainly feature!

The fact that we are able (hopefully) to be able to see each other today is wonderful and I think highlights quite powerfully how important fellowship is.

There has been a huge amount of worship material put online. A lot of it has been excellent, some very creative and some just doesn't sit well with me for one reason or another.

But the one thing it can't do is bring us together in the way that we are used to when we are in church.

Obviously for some people they may never have the option - they may be housebound for one reason or another and these new services have given them access to church that they've never had before - and that is a positive thing. But for many, not having the physical company of others makes it much harder to worship.

When we entered lent, we knew that we were entering a time of reflection and desert before reaching today's celebration, but whilst we can celebrate Christ's resurrection today, it doesn't feel quite the same. Not to me anyway, you may feel differently.

It is right of course that we still celebrate Christ's resurrection today - that is one of the defining elements of our faith, acknowledging that Christ rose from the dead and is now ruling in heaven with God. But for now, like Moses before us we are looking for God to lead us out of this desert and to return us to the promised land. The land that we knew and took for granted. Of being able to go out of our homes when we like, go shopping when we like, meeting with friends and being able to hug each other. I'm fortunate that I have Pete here with me, I think it must be very hard for those on their own who don't have any physical contact. And we need to remember all those for whom this lockdown means that they are confined to the home with an abusive partner or

challenging children. Whilst most of us are safe in our homes some are confined to a living hell.

Before we were put into lockdown, I wonder what the things were that you were longing for? Were you looking for a new job, a new car, a new house? Maybe you were just frustrated with how your life was and wanted it to be different, to be like someone else's. Maybe you found yourself stressed because you were too busy and didn't have enough time to get all your work done, let alone do anything for fun.

What does that longing look like now?

Do you still long for the same things or has your life taken on a new perspective?

Obviously, some of you have continued working because you either work from home or are one of our extremely valuable key workers. But if you haven't been working, or have been working less - have your priorities changed? I know mine have.

Life will look very different for quite a while and I wonder if it will ever look the way it did before. My hope is that the generosity of spirit and kindness that we have seen in Grayswood over the last few weeks will remain and that our community, whilst already special, will be an even more wonderful place to be a part of.

We will all have been changed in some way or another. I know some people have struggled to connect with God and with the bible during this time, that's understandable.

I felt completely overwhelmed the first 2 weeks with so many emails coming in from the diocese with recommendations, suggestions and ideas, of things to do and things to read. My mind became completely consumed with it all and I had to take a step back and

acknowledge that I wouldn't be able to do everything that others were doing. I had to find the right path that would work for us as a community without burning myself to a frazzle and that took time.

Hebrews 11:1 tells us '*Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*'

Many people are putting their faith and trust in our wonderful NHS now, quite rightly, we are blessed to have it. We, however, have the added advantage of being able to put our faith in a God who loves us and cares for us, despite our questions and our anger. James 4: 8 says '*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*'

However hard this has been, and continues to be, the reality remains that today is a day of celebration. We are celebrating the reality that Jesus is alive and reigns with us today and forever, his love for us enduring forever.

Amen

Intercessions

Please spend a time in prayer.

Lord in your mercy: **hear our prayer**
Merciful Father

**All accept these prayers for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Hymn Thine be the glory

Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son;
endless is the victory, thou o'er death hast won;
angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave clothes where thy body lay.

Refrain:

*Thine be the glory, risen conquering Son,
Endless is the vict'ry, thou o'er death hast won.*

Lo! Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb;
Lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and gloom;
let the Church with gladness, hymns of triumph sing;
for her Lord now liveth, death hath lost its sting.

Refrain:

*Thine be the glory, risen conquering Son,
Endless is the vict'ry, thou o'er death hast won.*

No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of life;
life is naught without thee; aid us in our strife;
make us more than conquerors, through thy deathless love:
bring us safe through Jordan to thy home above.

Refrain:

*Thine be the glory, risen conquering Son,
Endless is the vict'ry, thou o'er death hast won.*

The Blessing

What is the Good News?

All **The grave is empty.**

Christ is risen.

All **ALLELUIA!**

What is the Good News?

All **The light shines in the darkness**

The darkness can never put it out.

All **ALLELUIA!**

What is the Good News?

All: **We are God's people. ALLELUIA!**

Go in peace and joy

to love and serve the Lord.

All: **In the name of the risen Christ.**

Amen. Alleluia!

Happy Easter

*Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your
mercy
in this time of uncertainty
and distress.*

*Sustain and support the
anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are
brought low;
that we may rejoice in
your comfort
knowing that nothing can
separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.*

