

Home Service for 4/11/21

Welcome and Announcements

You might notice a few changes. You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

*How beautiful when we live together in unity and love!*

Call to Worship:

This is the day to walk in the light. This is the day to share signs of peace. This is the day to believe where we have not seen. This is the day to embrace what we cannot touch. Come! Let us worship the Lord of life.

Opening Prayer:

God our Creator, we come today thanking you for your unconditional love. It was with your love that you painted the sky. It was with your love that you produced the sun to keep us company as we travel during the day and the moon to accompany us as we slumber at night. Your love continues to let us know that we are never alone, but you are always with us. So, God, tattoo your word on our hearts so that our souls may forever be revived. Let your precepts run through our veins, causing us to rejoice and be glad. We know the troubles that we see, but we shall rejoice and be glad. We know the hurt and the pain that we must endure, but we shall rejoice and be glad. We know that the justice system was not designed for people of our hue, but we shall rejoice and be glad. We shall rejoice because the same God who painted upon the velvety night sky is the same God who is still painting our way out of no way. Lord, we're depending on you, and it's in Jesus' name, we pray. AMEN!!!

Prayer of Confession:

Holy God, we confess our doubts. When our childhood understandings fall away, we feel naked. When our long-held beliefs seem to crumble, we feel lost. When our convictions are questioned, we feel ashamed. Guide us into right paths, O God. Guide our feet into the way of peace, guide our hands to care for others, guide our hearts to love our neighbors. Call us back to You, O Christ, and renew our faith. When the ground is unsteady, loving God, put us back on right paths by doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with You. Amen.

## Words of Assurance

*The Lord is our chosen portion and our cup.  
God binds us in, counsels our minds and instructs our hearts.  
God helps us to stand firm for justice, mercy, and peace.  
When we fall, God lifts us up, forgives us,  
and remembers our sins no more. Amen.*

## Read Psalm 133

<sup>1</sup> How good and pleasant it is  
when God's people live together in unity!  
<sup>2</sup> It is like precious oil poured on the head,  
running down on the beard,  
running down on Aaron's beard,  
down on the collar of his robe.  
<sup>3</sup> It is as if the dew of Hermon  
were falling on Mount Zion.  
For there the LORD bestows his blessing,  
even life forevermore.

## Prayers of the People:

*Lord hear our prayers for those who we have brought before you this day, may they know your Presence, Love and Healing. May those who are grieving know also your Comfort and know through your Son's resurrection that their loved one is safely in your arms patiently waiting to be joined in eternal life. Also give us patients as we await your answers to our personal prayers.*

*O God, like Thomas, we want to believe, but we often doubt. When we awake to news of new deaths, another natural disaster somewhere, stories of people still struggling in the economic crisis — we have to work to find hope. As we walk alongside family or friends suffering from illness or addiction, dealing with the pain of broken relationships, we aren't always confident of your presence. The shadow of the gloom obscures our sight.*

*We are thankful for the work of your Spirit in those people who encourage us and speak your presence into our lives, who help us remember your love story (with and without words), who remind us that you haven't abandoned us, who are present in the suffering — gathering us in your arms and crying with us. Help us trust that doubt is a part of faith — and not a lack of faith.*

*Open the eyes of our hearts so we might see you. Kindle in our hearts a desire to know you better and renew our spirits. Help us grow in our faith and build our lives on the sure foundation of the risen Christ. As we sing the joyous Easter refrains, may our ears truly hear the mystery of our faith proclaimed. Let our minds and our hearts truly take in the good news of your presence among us. We pray in the name of the risen Lord. Amen.*

## 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 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 forever and ever. AMEN

**Read the Lesson:** Acts 4:32-35

<sup>32</sup> All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. <sup>33</sup> With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all <sup>34</sup> that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales <sup>35</sup> and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

**Read the Epistle Lesson:** 1 John 1:1-2:2

**1** That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. **2** The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. **3** We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. **4** We write this to make our<sup>[a]</sup> joy complete.

Light and Darkness, Sin and Forgiveness

**5** This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. **6** If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. **7** But if we walk in the

light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all<sup>[b]</sup> sin.

<sup>8</sup> If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

**2** My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. <sup>2</sup> He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

### **Read the Gospel Lesson: John 20:19-31**

<sup>19</sup> On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” <sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

<sup>21</sup> Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” <sup>22</sup> And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas (also known as Didymus<sup>[a]</sup>), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

<sup>26</sup> A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”

<sup>28</sup> Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

<sup>29</sup> Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

<sup>30</sup> Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. <sup>31</sup> But these are written that you may believe<sup>[b]</sup> that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

## Message

Let us pray: Dear Heavenly Father, the resurrection of your Son, Jesus the Christ, has been the greatest news that the world has ever heard. It turns our priorities upside down, and draws us into an ever-deepening relationship with you, the source of life itself. Grant us your Holy Spirit, that we might continue to grow in faith, witness to others of your tremendous gift of redeeming grace, and live our lives in praise and thanksgiving as our Lord's disciples. This we ask in Christ's holy name. Amen.

Let us begin at looking at the disciples locked up inside their house. They had barricaded the door. Earlier that morning, they had heard some outrageous news from some of their women friends. The women had travelled to Jesus' grave. But when they got there, his tomb was empty! Peter and John ran to the tomb to check things out. They found it just as the women had said. Empty! As the day wore on, their anxiety grew and grew. Now they had sheltered in their house to avoid danger.

Now take a moment and think about what we have been doing this last year. 2000 years later, we are sheltering in place. The disciples set themselves apart from fear of danger. The same is true for us. We're fearful of the things that might harm us. We're wary of the Coronavirus. And if we would get sick, we fear we might be one of the unfortunate ones who end up dying from it. Many are afraid of what this pandemic means for them economically. Workers fear they may lose their jobs. And people who already are unemployed wonder how they will make ends meet.

There is no lack of anxiety these days. And for some, the self-isolating adds to their stress. Parents who find themselves at home with their children; at the same time they're working from home, they are also overseeing their children's online school lessons. These parents are nearing their overload point for anxiety and stress. Stress is on the rise. So we can definitely relate to the disciples and their fear.

But then the risen Jesus comes in through their locked door. Jesus enters their anxiety-filled room and he says, "Peace! Peace be with you!" Into their fears, Jesus, the risen Jesus, brings peace. And he doesn't bring just any old peace. He brings his peace. For he is peace. His very presence is the source of their peace. And when Jesus gives you peace, you have the peace that passes all human understanding! Our risen Lord Jesus Christ spreads his peace upon us in our own anxious times. Jesus' new life is our new life. His victory is our victory. His peace is our peace. In his peace, we cast our anxieties upon him.

Amid the anxiety and fear, and all the troubles of this world, Christ comes into our presence, offering his peace. There is hope for each of us in the midst of all our anxieties. There is help when we feel like giving up. There is courage when we are tempted to hide; for there is one who can enter any room. There is one who can overcome any problem. There is one who can bring peace to every anxious heart. On this day and every day, he holds out his hands to us and shows us his side and says, "Peace be with you." And if it is hard for us to hear those words, if it is hard for us to imagine that this story can be true in our lives, that is OK. Jesus can still give each of us what we need. So today we are invited to come to the Lord's Table, to open our empty hands, to touch and taste for ourselves. Come and see and believe. Jesus still has the power to give us what we need today and every day. For that we should Praise God.

When we think of Easter we think about the Resurrection and what that did. The Resurrection made a huge difference! When Jesus rose from the dead; it placed a huge exclamation point at the end of his teachings. Because of the Resurrection, what our Savior taught and what He did continue to impact the lives of his followers, even to this very day!

The early Christians knew that nothing could compare to the relationships that Christ offers with God and with each other. The Resurrection tells us that this life, the years that we live here are but a grain of sand among the mounds of millennia that God will grant to us. The Resurrection tells us that our troubles and trials here in this life cannot compare to what God has in store for an eternity. The Resurrection elevates God's love for us in Christ and our love for each other beyond anything else that this world can offer.

Easter makes a difference. It changes cold, hard, self-centered people into a community that cares for one another. It gives boldness to weak hearts. It gives hope to suffering spirits. It provides a perspective.

Because of Easter, the fearful disciples of Christ became the force God used to plant the Christian Church. Peter was turned from a man who was cowed by a young maiden into the bold preacher who proclaimed Christ. The Resurrection of Jesus takes us beyond fear.

Because of Easter, Paul was turned from a persecutor of Christians to a church planter. The Risen Christ changes us to bold defenders and proclaimers of God's love and care for us in Christ.

Because of the Resurrection and because of Easter, Mary and Martha found out that the grave and death were not to be feared that Jesus is the Resurrection and Life. The risen Christ says that we too shall rise.

Because of Easter, the early church became a community of believers that never felt alone, lonely or abandoned, because the needs of the individual believer became the concern of the entire community.

Because of Easter, poverty and need were and are addressed as the believers of the church saw and see their brothers and sisters in Christ as the extended Christian family whose needs were met by altruistic sacrifice and generosity. Because of Easter, faith abounds. Thomas worshipped Christ when He saw the wounds in the Lord's hands, feet and side. Because of Easter the message of the crucified and risen Christ blazed across the continents, infecting those who heard with faith and hope and joy.

Because of Easter, we know that God is with us and that He loves us. Because of Easter, we know that God is working a way to empty graves and to bring life to hearts that are dead. Because of Easter, you will be blessed to see a new day, a day where face to face and hand in hand with Jesus you will be blessed with life and that more abundantly. Take on life with renewed zest and vigor and joy, because Christ is Risen! Amen.

Benediction:

*Walk in the light of God. Live in the light of God. Bask in the light of God. May the Light of all lights transform your doubts into faith, and your sorrows into joy. Go with the peace of God. Amen.*