

Easter 2

7/4/24

Caves Beach

CALL TO WORSHIP

Strengthen our faith at this resurrection time, O God;

give us the courage of Mary Magdalene.

Strengthen our faith at this resurrection time, O God;

give us the honesty of Thomas the apostle.

Strengthen our faith at this resurrection time, O God;

give us the joy of the gathered disciples.

Strengthen our faith at this resurrection time, O God;

**give us the active spirit of the Risen Christ. Christ be praised.
Alleluia!**

Opening Prayer

The Risen Christ will transform us!

**Christ will transform our earthbound worship into an act of
glorious praise.**

The Risen Christ will transform us!

**Christ will transform our hesitant community into an active,
enthusiastic group of friends.**

The Risen Christ will transform us!

Christ will transform our fear of the unknown into a ready spirit of adventure.

he Risen Christ will transform us!

Christ will transform our self-serving into service of those around us, and of those whose crying needs are brought home to us. Amen.

HYMN 224 All hail the power of Jesus' name

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmtxrFgrEA&t=23s>

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

God of promise,

we give thanks for all the good earth that sustains us

with the miracle of life and growth.

We give you thanks that just as Jesus came to his disciples after his resurrection and showed himself to them,

you come to us and show us yourself in so many ways.

We see you in the world around us,

and we see you in the faces of each other.

We thank you that you remind us today

and every day of the great joy and miracle of life.

We celebrate your gift today.

God, Psalm 133 begins:

'How very good and pleasant it is
when kindred live together in unity!'

It is very good, God of love,
but so often it is more of a dream than a reality.

Kindred unity is often far from us.

We defend ourselves so quickly,
we are on our guard so often,
we take offence so easily.

We misunderstand each other and assume malice is meant.

We mistrust each other's intentions.

We do not live as the kin that we are.

Sometimes, we do not even acknowledge that we are kin to each other.

Unity is often far from us.

Forgive us, God of all love and grace.

Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Sisters and brothers,

we are all members of the one family of humanity,

we are all part of God's great community.

Be assured that all that is broken can be mended,
and all that is wrong can be righted.

We are loved.

We are forgiven!

READINGS

- **1 John 1:1—2:2**

1 We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— 2 this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— 3 what we have seen and heard we also declare to you so that you also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; 7 but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

2: My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. 2 But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

- **John 20:19–31**

19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” 22 When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

24 But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

26 A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” 27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” 28 Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” 29 Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. 31 But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

HYMN 365 Christ the Lord is risen again

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nzy7jFNUc3w>

SERMON

Quite often we tend to be drawn towards the Thomas part of this passage. Today I want to look at some other parts of this passage. What else does Jesus say?

I am sure that some people think that it is unrealistic for me to get up front and say that Christ has risen and as a consequence the world has changed. Some people can agree with this and wander off home saying: 'Yes, we believe that'. As Christians we can think that we know all about our faith.

Then the reality of the real world comes into play. Once we actually look at what is going on in our world we know that it has not been fully transformed. If we just look around we can see that there is evil and death in our world and that it seems to go on unchanged. People plant bombs aimed to kill and maim innocent people. Politicians twist and manipulate their words to score political points against their opponents.

Children are raped by people who are supposed to be their carers. People are sold into prostitution and slavery. Then there are the people who are dispossessed, imprisoned and tortured for their beliefs. Schools, hospitals and homes are demolished to make way for vast commercial developments and often there is no room for those without vast wealth.

In view of this, what can we really say about the fact that Christ has risen and triumphed over death. Are we living in a dream world as Christians? Perhaps it was best put repeatedly by Martin Luther King in his famous human rights speech: "I have a dream!" That speech was a pivot point for the movement to take on the problems of racial discrimination in the USA.

Perhaps we also need to start dreaming? We need to let the risen Christ take over our dreams so that we can respond with changes in our hearts, our lives, our politics and our planet.

In reality the message of the Easter event is a public celebration which is very disruptive and dangerous. It disrupts and lays bare the ways of the world, our society and the actions of those who want to build their own selfish little empires.

There are theological seminaries and religious academic institutions which don't want to allow simple fishermen to be developed into powerful preachers. There are medical systems which will not allow true healing without at least having payment linked to the latest bulk-billing list. There are military schools where they cannot comprehend the idea that justice comes through the cross rather than at the end of a gun. There are religious institutions which want to restrict the sharing of the expression of God's grace to a few 'chosen' people.

We just have to look back at the way that Jesus operated to see how much trouble He got into as He challenged and whittled away those institutions. They had built monopolies and an empire on their own selfish terms. These people were not prepared to lose control without a fight and they were prepared to go as far as drumming up false charges and arranging painful torture and death for the one who opposed them.

The radical and ongoing message that we celebrate in the Easter event is more than just an accident of history. It is a message of freedom lead to transformation that couldn't contain Peter and John in a prison. It is a message which the tomb couldn't hide away from us.

Jesus' Spirit is alive and continues to set us free from all those things which would like to destroy our faith. Through the Holy Spirit Jesus continues to be active in the world. This movement undermines those who would exploit others and degrade them without justice.

But that is not all that is relevant here. There is also a scary side. As Christ stood among that desperate group of disciples in the upper room he said: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

Just as we are rejoicing in the new found freedom and love of Christ we are equally called on to carry on the mission that Christ started. Jesus goes on to say: "Receive the Holy Spirit." In this simple phrase Jesus not only commissions us and equips us for the tasks ahead, He also doesn't leave us with an escape clause.

Just like with those first disciples we can't keep ourselves locked away in some upper room to hide from the world. We cannot shelter away from the outside world in which we live. That simple action of commissioning for them was their key to becoming active disciples, just like us.

There is nothing wrong in spending time here in the church, recharging and re-equipping for the week ahead. There is no doubt that God would want us to utilise the presence of the Holy Spirit in our worship times seeking to deepen our faith. This can lead to us being transformed and empowered by God. If we neglect this it is just like we suffer the consequences when we neglect the garden.

In the quiet times of worship and fellowship and prayer we can leave ourselves open to hearing God's guidance through the Holy Spirit. This is where we can discern where we are being led. This process is easier for

some people and those with greater gifts are called on taken on a proportional amount of effort.

The people with the gift of prayer and contemplation need to be able to make those of us who tend to slack off a bit more aware of our mission. They can call us to respond to the deeper discovery of our faith and the mysterious depths of Christ's message for us. Within each group within the church there needs to be those fellow travellers who can keep challenging us.

Some of us can be a bit like Thomas in today's reading and need to have a more personal exposure to the living Christ. Jesus did not condemn Thomas for his hesitation. Once Thomas was exposed to the living Christ he too took up his cross. As we know Thomas was the first martyr for Christ.

Remembering the words: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you" we need to be prepared to move out from here as a witness to the realities of faith in our world. We need to witness to God's passion for justice and love and at the same time to confront everything which would seek to destroy and diminish the wonder of the beautiful world that God has given to us.

As we go out we are more than the people of the good news, we are the people who can offer inclusive love and freely offered forgiveness. But we also carry with us the rest of the charge given by Jesus: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

It is not like God needs our personal input before forgiveness is offered. It is a simple psychological fact that some people cannot experience this forgiveness until it is actually offered to them.

This can be very relevant for people who have been socially conditioned to absorb wrongdoing. It can be as simple as people who have felt badly because of the way that they have been treated in society and judged. It might be a child who has been abused by an adult and then made to feel bad because they have been convinced that they deserved that sort of treatment. Or it might be someone who has a mental illness who is made to feel uncomfortable because their behaviour is not that which we would expect from other people.

Where this sort of imposed guilt is put on someone they must feel full acceptance in order to undo the harm that has been imposed on them. Within the Gospels there is story after story of Jesus coming across people who have been badly treated by society with their fears and feelings of rejection being well founded. In every case Jesus affirms to those people that they are loved and accepted by God.

Jesus Christ is risen, and His mission of liberating love is continuing in the face of the corruption, the power lust, the degradation and the oppression that is so rife in our world. If we want to live up to our identity as God's children, and as followers of Jesus, then we must as a community take on his yoke and continue his commission.

We need to find ways that will encourage everyone to gather together behind closed doors to meet with Christ, and having been empowered and commissioned by Him, to move out into the world, announcing and living out the message of life in the midst of death, hope in the midst of despair, and forgiveness and acceptance in the midst of judgmental rejection.

HYMN 690 Beauty for brokenness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D81ZD1NDPyE&t=5s>

PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING

We have the great privilege of being one family of care and concern as we share in our offering together.

God of generous giving,

thank you for the opportunity

to be sisters and brothers

to each other in practical ways in our offering today.

We give in joy and in hope.

Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Black Hill Uniting Church meets every Sunday with a regular attendance of 10-12 people. We are a true rural church, with an operating cemetery and very strong community and historical ties to the community. We have a small hall, that is regularly used for congregation and extended church family events. We are looking toward increasing our connections to the wider community through more events. We have many people connected to us through family history, with many relatives laid to rest in our cemetery. Past events have shown us that our continued presence in the Black Hill community and contact with them is very important, with their support for us being very strong.

Prayer: We pray for the leaders and congregation of Black Hill Uniting Church as they continue to maintain the buildings, grounds, cemetery and historic significance of this rural church, whilst bringing the community

together by continuing to be a place of welcoming hospitality and friendship to the wider community. Amen.

The image of people being locked away and full of fear is one that is still common in our world today.

There are many places throughout the world where people are deprived of their liberty and forced to work in cruel, slave-like situations – in clothing factories, as domestic staff, in cocoa plantations and in the sex industry.

There continues to be detention centres and camps in which refugees and people seeking asylum are held in poor conditions with little hope of leaving.

There are those who find themselves in the grip of domestic violence believing that there is no way out.

There are people locked in pain and grief and confusion.

Can we intervene in the world in such a way that even if such barriers and barricades remain hope and love can find their way inside?

God, there is no barrier that is impenetrable to your liberating grace.

Grant us the courage to scale walls of injustice and breakdown those things that cause division between neighbours,

the destruction of your good creation
and diminish the integrity and dignity of your people.
Let it be so.

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.

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 yours
now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN 526 Lord Jesus Christ

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKsbd5UqKkc>

COMMUNION

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you

Christ our Lord invites to his table
all who love him,
who earnestly repent of their sin
and seek to live in peace with one another.

Be present, risen Lord Jesus,
as you were with your disciples,
and make yourself known to us
in the breaking of the bread;
for you live and reign with the Father
and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Hear the words of institution of this sacrament
as recorded by the apostle Paul:

For I received from the Lord
what I also delivered to you,

that the Lord Jesus,
on the night when he was betrayed,
took bread,
and when he had given thanks,
he broke it and said:

This is my body which is for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

In the same way also the cup,
after supper, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this, as often as you drink it,
for the remembrance of me.

For as often as you eat this bread
and drink the cup,
you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

And so according to our Saviour's command,
we set this bread and this cup apart
for the holy supper to which he calls us,
and we come to God with our prayers of thanksgiving.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Thanks and praise, glory and honour are rightly yours,
our Lord and God,

for you alone are worthy.

In time beyond our dreaming

you brought forth life out of darkness,

and in the love of Christ your Son

you set man and woman at the heart of your creation.

When the right time had come,

you sent your Son Jesus.

He was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,

and became truly human.

And so we praise you

with the faithful of every time and place,

joining with choirs of angels

and the whole creation

in the eternal hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,

heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

We thank you that you called a covenant people to be a light to the nations.

Through Moses you taught us to love your law,

and in the prophets you cried out for justice.

In the fullness of your mercy

you became one with us in Jesus Christ,

who gave himself up for us on the cross.

You make us alive together with him,

that we may rejoice in his presence

and share his peace.

By water and the Spirit

you open the kingdom to all who believe,

and welcome us to your table:

for by grace we are saved, through faith.

With this bread and this cup

we do as our Saviour commands:

we celebrate the redemption he has won for us.

Pour out the Holy Spirit on us

and on these gifts of bread and wine,

that they may be for us the body and blood of Christ.

Make us one with him,

one with each other,

and one in ministry in the world,

until at last we feast with him in the kingdom.

Through your Son, Jesus Christ,

in your holy Church,

all honour and glory are yours, Father almighty,

now and for ever.

The bread we break

is a sharing in the body of Christ.

The cup we take

is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

The gifts of God for the people of God.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.

Receive this holy sacrament
of the body and blood of Christ,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

DISTRIBUTION

Let us pray:

Bountiful God,
at this table you graciously feed us
with the bread of life and cup of eternal salvation.

May we who have reached out our hands
to receive this sacrament
be strengthened in your service;
we who have sung your praises
tell of your glory in our lives;

we who have seen the greatness of your love
see you face to face in your kingdom,
and come to worship you with all your saints for ever.

Amen.

HYMN 228 Crown Him with many crowns

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FiJYgC_6AFc

BENEDICTION

Go in hope.

God goes with you and in you.

Go in joy.

God gives us life.

Go in love.

You are sisters and brothers to each other.

Go in peace

to love and serve God.

Amen.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liH_HdkWs74