



### Call to Worship

*But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name. John 20: 31*

**Hymn:** STF 295 *Alleluia, alleluia give thanks to the risen Lord* (Donald Fishel © Word of God, Ann Arbor, MI)

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| 1. Jesus is Lord of all the earth;<br>he is the King of creation:<br><i>Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord,<br/>alleluia, alleluia, give praise to his name.</i> | 3. We have been crucified with Christ;<br>Now we shall live forever:    |
| 2. Spread the good news o'er all the earth:<br>Jesus has died and has risen:  | 4. God has proclaimed the just reward:<br>new life for all! Alleluia!   |
|   | 5. Come, let us praise the living God,<br>joyfully sing to our Saviour: |

### Prayers

We come to you, filled with joy that you are risen; we approach with hope, for you have conquered death. We approach filled with wonder at the length, depth, height and breadth of your love. Alleluia. Amen.  
We are sorry for the times when we have failed to carry our cross. We are sorry for overlooking the needs of our neighbours. We are sorry for when we have doubted you. We are sorry for our lack of faith, hope and love. Forgive us, Lord, and fill us with your risen life. Amen

**Hymn:** STF 305 *Low in the grave he lay* (Robert Lowry, 1826-1899)

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| Low in the grave he lay,<br>Jesus, my Saviour,<br>waiting the coming day,<br>Jesus. my Lord:  | Vainly they watch his bed,<br>Jesus, my Saviour;<br>vainly they seal the dead,<br>Jesus, my Lord: |
| <i>Up from the grave he arose,<br/>with a mighty triumph o'er his foes;<br/>he arose a victor from the dark domain,<br/>and he lives forever with his saints to reign:<br/>He arose! He arose! Allelujah! Christ arose!</i> | Death cannot keep his prey.<br>Jesus, my Saviour;<br>he tore the bars away,<br>Jesus, my Lord:    |

**Scripture:** John 20:19-31

**Hymn:** STF 316 *When Easter to the dark world came* (W. H. Hamilton, 1886-1958)

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| When Easter to the dark world came,<br>fair flowers glowed like scarlet flame: | When ten disciples met in fear,<br>then 'Peace' said Jesus, 'I am here.'           |
| <i>At Eastertide, at Eastertide,<br/>O glad was the world at Eastertide.</i>   | When Thomas' heart was hurt and grieved,<br>then Jesus' wounds his doubt relieved: |
| When Mary in the garden walked,<br>and with her risen Master talked:           | This Eastertide with joyful voice<br>we'll sing: 'The Lord is King! Rejoice!       |
| When John and Peter in their gloom<br>met angels at the empty tomb:            | <i>At Eastertide, at Eastertide,<br/>O sing, all the world, for Eastertide.</i>    |

**Sermon** *Recognising Jesus*

We need to talk about Thomas. We probably all have stories about bumping into people we know, unexpectedly, in places where we wouldn't expect to see them. What helps us to recognize people? Place, clothing, other people they are with. But poor Thomas, didn't get a chance to recognize Jesus, because when he appeared to the other disciples, nail-prints and all, Thomas isn't there, and to Thomas, that wasn't fair. And he won't take the others' word for it that Jesus is alive, he says, 'I want to recognize him for myself'.

Doubting Thomas has become his nickname – is that fair? He knew Jesus was dead. The doors were locked. Grief does funny things to people. They were all tired, wrung out, anxious and afraid. It could all have been mass hysteria, or mass hallucination. With all those reasons to doubt, would you have believed what you were hearing. Might not we have been a bit miffed that all our mates had supposedly seen Jesus alive, and we'd missed him? Can you imagine what the following week might have been like for him, with everyone going on about what they had seen, and him feeling out of it? Can you imagine what it was like for Peter, meeting Jesus in that upstairs room again, knowing that he had recently denied ever knowing him, not once, but three times. Is that why, when Mary came to the disciples to tell them that Jesus was alive, and that she had seen him, Peter runs to the tomb. Was it to say sorry, was it to prove that he did know and love Jesus, and if he was alive, he wanted to tell him so?

Peter denied Jesus when he was alive, Thomas doubted, that having seen him dead, he could possibly be alive. One who doubted, one who denied. Which are we? It is very easy in the confines of our church family to insist that we would never deny Jesus, or that we could ever doubt him, but it is difficult sometimes for us, in secular company, to put forward the Christian viewpoint, or to declare our faith. Poor Thomas, having missed out on Jesus' first visit to the upper room, has to wait a whole week for the next one. But when Jesus does come back, - he speaks personally to Thomas. When Jesus appears to the disciples on the shores of Lake Galilee, he has a personal encounter with Peter, and takes him on one side for a one-to-one conversation.

These accounts of Thomas, the so-called doubter, and Peter, who denied Jesus, give us hope of the possibility of an encounter with Jesus for ourselves. That he knows what we're like – frail, fearful, doubting, envious of others' experiences. That he reassures us with unconditional time and boundless love. That doubt, and denial, followed by a light-bulb moment is understandable, and acceptable.

To finish, let's look at the last 2 verses of chapter 20, verses 30-31: *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name. 'So that you may come to believe'. Not they, not others, not people, not even we, but you – it's personal. And for the one amazing reason that both Thomas and Peter discovered for themselves – that you may have LIFE! Amen*

### Prayer

'The risen Christ came to his disciples, and said, 'Peace be with you'. Lord we long for a sense of your peace within us and around us. Your peace which reassures, comforts and yet challenges our doubts and denials. We long for peace in our world, especially at this time in Ukraine. We feel helpless in the presence of this conflict and suffering, yet we know that you come with peace in your hands. May that peace hover over the decisions made by world leaders, local leaders and individuals so that the way that leads to compassion and unity will be taken. We long for a sense of peace to come to our friends and family who are going through times of distress and difficulty. Bring peace close to those who are ill, frail, or facing difficult decisions or distressing diagnosis. Bring the comfort of your peace to those who are grieving the loss of a loved one, those who feel lonely, and those who are anxious or afraid. We ask these prayers, in and through the name of Jesus, our risen Lord. Amen. *Our Father ...*

### Hymn

STF 303 *I know that my Redeemer lives* (Samuel Medley, 1738-1799)

I know that my Redeemer lives –  
what joy the blest assurance gives!  
He lives, he lives, who once was dead;  
he lives, my everlasting Head!

He lives, to bless me with his love;  
he lives, to plead for me above;  
he lives, my hungry soul to feed;  
he lives, to help in time of need.

He lives, and grants me daily breath;  
he lives, and I shall conquer death;  
he lives, my mansion to prepare;  
he lives, to lead me safely there.

He lives, all glory to his name;  
he lives, my Saviour, still the same;  
what joy the blest assurance gives,  
I know that my Redeemer lives!

**Blessing:** May the risen Lord be with you as you serve him in the world. May his strength sustain you, his peace still you, and his love inspire you to live and love as he did., through Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.