



Opening Words:

After the agony of the cross, Lord Jesus you are here.

After the desolation of the grave, Lord Jesus you are here.

After your triumphant bursting from the tomb, Lord Jesus you are here.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Hymn: "Christ the Lord is Risen Today"

https://youtu.be/peSt3BT_MgM

Christ the Lord is risen today;

Alleluia!

All creation joins to say:

Alleluia!

Raise your joys and triumphs high;

Alleluia!

Sing, you heavens; let earth, reply:

Alleluia!

Love's redeeming work is done,

Alleluia!

Fought the fight, the battle won;

Alleluia!

Vain the stone, the watch, the seal;

Alleluia!

Christ has burst the gates of hell:

Alleluia!

Lives again our glorious King;

Alleluia!

Where, O death, is now your sting?

Alleluia!

Once he died our souls to save;

Alleluia!

Where's your victory, boasting grave?

Alleluia!

Soar we now where Christ has led,

Alleluia!

Following our exalted Head;

Alleluia!

Made like him, like him we rise;

Alleluia!

Ours the cross, the grave, the skies:

Alleluia!

King of Glory! Soul of bliss!

Alleluia!

Everlasting life is this,

Alleluia!

You to know, your power to prove,

Alleluia!

Thus to sing, and thus to love:

Alleluia!

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Let us pray:

O Lord God, Eternal Creator, you dwell in the hearts of all who worship you today. We praise and thank you for raising Jesus from the dead and setting us free to worship and adore you. To you belongs all the honour! Jesus Christ, Merciful Saviour, you meet us when we turn to you. On that first Easter morning you rose from the grave to conquer sin and death for ever. To you belongs all the glory!

Holy Spirit, Divine Presence, you are the very Breath of Life. We receive the peace of the risen Christ as did those first disciples in the Upper Room. To you belongs all the praise! *Pause*

O God, the Three-in-One, we confess that our lives have been full of death and hate instead of life and love. Forgive us our sins and strengthen in us all that is good. *Pause*

As we receive your assurance of forgiveness, you fill us afresh with love and life, compelling us to pour them out into the lives of others. **Amen.**

Bible readings Colossians 3: 1-4
John 20: 1-18

When I was a little boy, maybe about four or five years of age, my older brother took pity on our minister, who was married but had no children and decided on Christmas morning that he would take him a small Macintoshes easter egg. Not to be outdone, I decided to give one of my eggs to the minister's wife. It was by no means the most generous gift I have ever given in my life, but it started a tradition than went on for over twenty years. Even after that minister had moved on, and my brother and I were married, we would travel firstly to Ilkley, and then to Skipton where he retired on Easter Saturday and deliver a small Easter Egg, right up until the final year of his life. It is sometimes strange how the tiniest of gestures can make a big difference and for years, that little tradition came to mean a lot to us as a family, and to that minister and his wife. We never did it for any subsequent incumbents.

The reason for me mentioning this little experience is that lovely as the story is, it started with two little boys making a gesture which became a tradition, and much as we enjoyed going and seeing our old minister each Easter, it was a habit that was hard to break. I'm sure that he enjoyed meeting our girlfriends, who became our wives, and witness the change from children to adults, the original gesture was long gone and the two little Easter eggs became little more than being tokens. Over my many years in Church, Easter Day services have commenced with the words spoken by the minister **Alleluia! Christ is risen!** And the congregation responds **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!** Which is great, and I wouldn't want to discourage people from doing this, but I don't think that was what the first Easter Day was like.

It started with mourning:

I often wonder why Mary Magdalen was going to the tomb? There is a school of thought that she is going to anoint the body of Christ, but that doesn't make sense to me, the body is sealed in a tomb with a large stone at the entrance, it is unlikely that Mary would have been able to move it. I think that there is maybe another reason. Quite often when somebody has died, people need to feel close to them, we often see floral tributes at the roadside, people will tend graves, visit where their loved one's ashes have been buried, there is something in our human nature that makes us want to be close to the person we have lost. People who are in that moment soon after a shocking death need to be close to the person they have lost.

It developed into total confusion and misunderstanding:

When Mary sees that the stone has been rolled away, she doesn't immediately think "Christ is risen!" why would she? Mary had been at the cross, she had seen his broken body, nothing more than a lifeless shell of the man she had loved, she knew that he was dead. Her immediate reaction was that somebody had stolen his body, the ultimate insult, taking his life had not been enough for them, now they had taken his body and she needed to know where he was. Mary runs to get Peter and John, such is the urgency, the desperation to find her Lord.

Do we need to understand to believe:

I love the fact that John, the younger, fitter man arrives at the tomb first, but hovers by the entrance looking in, I love the way that Peter always comes across as the kind of man that charges in without thinking and faces the consequences later, he doesn't hover by the entrance, he goes straight in. I can understand John being reluctant, this is a tomb, and John comes across as a thinker, he looks around and even though he can't understand how this has happened, he is the first to believe in the resurrection.

Mary – The first woman to see the risen Christ:

Even when Mary sees the risen Christ for herself, she still doesn't recognise him, maybe because she is looking at him through tear filled eyes, maybe because he is silhouetted against the bright sunlight, maybe because he was the last person she expected to see. I think that the moment Jesus calls Mary by name, and she recognises him is one of the most beautiful moments in the gospel story. For generations men have dominated the Church and indeed life in general, but there is something very special about the fact that Jesus appoints Mary Magdalen the first apostle, witnessing his resurrection and he sends her out to share the gospel message with the others.

Consider:

- *How much do you feel the loss of Jesus on Holy Saturday, the desolation of having him taken away. How do you feel about a world with no Jesus? How important is a place for you, somewhere that you can feel close to God? Where is your special place?*
- *One of the reasons why some people find the Easter story a struggle, is because as you read the gospel accounts, they raise far more questions than answers. Mary faced with the horror of what she is seeing needs help. Who do you turn to in times when you are confused?*
- *I wonder if we will ever truly understand the resurrection. For generations people have tried to justify what happened and for some, the easiest solution is to simply deny it happened at all and the resurrection is nothing but a last ditch attempt by the early disciples to prove the Jesus the man was indeed Christ, the promised Messiah. Do you need to understand? Is faith enough for you? Are you conflicted by the resurrection story? How do you deal with that?*
- *In witnessing the resurrection story, Jesus calls us to be apostles in the modern world. How ready are you to share the message of the risen Christ? Is Easter just a part of tradition? Or does this Easter Day change your life? Do you believe that Christ is needed as much today as ever? Are you prepared to take risks for the sake of the Gospel.*

Only now can we truly say **Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

Hymn: See what a morning 309 Stf https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_9mKEyJGy0

See, what a morning, gloriously bright
With the dawning of hope in Jerusalem
Folded the graveclothes, tomb filled with light
As the angels announce, "Christ is risen!"
See God's salvation plan
Wrought in love, borne in pain, paid in sacrifice
Fulfilled in Christ, the Man
For He lives, Christ is risen from the dead!

See Mary weeping, "Where is He laid?"
As in sorrow, she turns from the empty tomb
Hears a voice speaking, calling her name
It's the Master, the Lord raised to life again!
The voice that spans the years
Speaking life, stirring hope, bringing peace to us
Will sound till He appears
For He lives, Christ is risen from the dead!

One with the Father, Ancient of Days
Through the Spirit who clothes faith with
certainty
Honour and blessing, glory, and praise
To the King crowned with power and authority!
And we are raised with Him
Death is dead, love has won, Christ has
conquered
And we shall reign with Him
For He lives, Christ is risen from the dead!

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Death is dead, love has won, Christ has
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For He lives, Christ is risen from the dead!

Prayers for others:

On this Easter Day, we remember those who have gone before us to glory. May we, like them, inherit your eternal kingdom.

We pray for all who are fearful today: people living alone; people who have endured great trials; people who are scared for each new day. Come among them and breathe your resurrection peace.

We pray for your worldwide church, united today in joyful acclamation of the risen Christ. May we, your church, daily witness to the life of the risen Christ in our own lives through our love for God, self, and neighbour.

We pray for the leaders of the world, and for the people they govern. Endue them with wisdom and justice, so that they might govern all people with equity.

Finally, we pray for ourselves. In Christ we are indeed more than conquerors. May Alleluia! be our triumphant song today and always.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn I serve a risen saviour <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qF6aBDS3drA>

... I serve a risen Saviour, He's in the world today
I know that He is living, whatever men may say
I see His hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer
And just the time I need Him He's always near

**... He lives (He lives), He lives (He lives), Christ
Jesus lives today**
*He walks with me and talks with me
Along life's narrow way
He lives (He lives), He lives (He lives), Salvation to
impart
You ask me how I know He lives?
He lives within my heart*

**... In all the world around me I see His loving
care**
And though my heart grows weary I never will
despair
I know that He is leading, through all the stormy
blast
The day of His appearing will come at last

**... He lives (He lives), He lives (He lives), Christ
Jesus lives today**
*He walks with me and talks with me
Along life's narrow way
He lives (He lives), He lives (He lives), Salvation to
impart
You ask me how I know He lives?
He lives within my heart*
**... Rejoice, rejoice, O Christian Lift up your voice
and sing**
Eternal hallelujahs to Jesus Christ, the King
The Hope of all who seek Him, the Help of all who
find
None other is so loving, so good and kind
**... He lives (He lives), He lives (He lives), Christ
Jesus lives today**
*He walks with me and talks with me
Along life's narrow way
He lives (He lives), He lives (He lives), Salvation to
impart
You ask me how I know He lives?
He lives within my heart*

Blessing

To you who belong to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, may God give you grace and peace
(1 Thessalonians 1:1c). **Amen.**