

Discipleship of the Easter Jesus (Mark 16:1-8)

The Resurrection of Jesus

*16*When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ²And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. ³They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' ⁴When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. ⁵As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. ⁶But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' ⁸So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

The Shorter Ending of Mark

[[And all that had been commanded them they told briefly to those around Peter. And afterwards Jesus himself sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation.]]

The Longer Ending of Mark

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

9 *[[Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. ¹⁰She went out and told those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping. ¹¹But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.*

Jesus Appears to Two Disciples

12 *After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. ¹³And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.*

Jesus Commissions the Disciples

14 *Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. ¹⁵And he said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. ¹⁶The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.'*

The Ascension of Jesus

19 So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.²⁰ And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it.]]

(Translation © Lawrence Moore, *Mark for Missional Disciples*, Walking the Walk Publications, 2018)

The faithful women disciples

Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James (and, presumably, Jesus), and Salome come to the tomb at first light. Mark contrasts them with Peter, James and John – the three male disciples that are so conspicuous by their absence. In Gethsemane, Jesus, in the deepest possible distress, takes them with him to share his moment of anguish and testing. He asks them twice to “keep awake”; this is something that he must do alone, but asks them twice to “keep awake” – ie to “keep watch/keep company”(14:34, 38). They do not keep watch, but sleep instead.

By contrast, Mark twice emphasises that the women “keep watch”: they keep watch during the crucifixion (15:40) and watch Jesus’ burial and the sealing of the tomb (15:47). Mark emphasises that they “keep watch” by constructing his crucifixion narrative over the three Roman watches: 9am, 12 noon and 3pm.

They have been prevented from anointing Jesus’ body for burial properly by both the Sabbath and the stone. These represent the tragedy and apparent hopelessness of this ending to Jesus’ mission: Pilate (Rome) has authorised the burial; the Sanhedrin has not even afforded the Lord of the Sabbath a proper burial in order that Sabbath observance isn’t violated. The world order of Empire apparently remains intact.

The hint of New Creation (16:2)

There is the barest hint that something radical – a game-changer – has happened in Mark’s narrative. This is a new week. The old week, sealed by Jesus’ death and the Sabbath, has been brought to a close. The Sabbath order – a 6-day week followed by the Sabbath – is modelled on the Genesis creation narrative. This was God’s order for human living: an order that was meant for the life, blessing and flourishing

of humankind. In the world of Empire, it has instead delivered death and godforsakenness. The Sabbath night has been the seal of darkness and death.

The women arrive “very early when the sun had risen”. Is this a Markan pun – “sunrise/Sonrise”? Is Mark deliberately evoking the creation story – when the cosmic darkness of chaos is shattered by God creating light? Is there a new story to be written, arising out of the ashes of the old?

“Who moved the stone?” (16:3-4)

These verses were the inspiration for Frank Morison’s classic, *Who Moved the Stone?* Mark tells us that the women return to the tomb on Easter Sunday expecting that everything would be as they had left it. Their question as they walk is very personal: “Who will roll away the stone *for us?*” The events of Easter Sunday are *for the disciples*. Discipleship of the Easter Jesus is not about faithfully attending a martyr’s tomb; it will prove to be something far more radical and challenging.

They arrive to find the stone rolled away and the tomb empty of Jesus’ body. We are not told who moved the stone and how. Mark’s narrative does not recount what had happened earlier; the stone has been moved and the women are told only, “He has been raised” (16:6). While it is clear that the answer to the “who” question is God, Mark’s emphasis is on the fact that the moving of the stone and the raising of Jesus have already happened. The women are latecomers on the scene. They will not see the risen Jesus at the tomb – “he is not here”; he has already gone ahead of them to Galilee, where he will be waiting for them (16:7).

The absence of Jesus: a new story has begun

Mark shows no apparent interest in Jesus’ experience of Easter Sunday. There are no resurrection appearances; no encounters with the disciples; no teaching on what the resurrection means, or how it ties in with all that has gone before – no equivalent of Luke’s Emmaus Road, Matthew’s Great Commissioning, or John’s restoration of Peter, in other words. Jesus, who has been so closely the focus of Mark’s passion narrative, and whose body has been so much a focal point, is now

simply “not here”. He has already left for Galilee.

Mark’s Easter story isn’t a resolution to his account of what has gone before. This is not some dramatic *dénouement*, in which he ties up all the loose ends and answers all the readers’ questions. What is most striking is precisely the *absence* of this sort of continuity with what has gone before, signified by the absence of the risen Jesus.

The resurrection of Jesus is not a last-second rabbit that Mark pulls out of the hat. It is not some sort of “happy ending” to his earlier story; that story ended – it was sealed with Jesus’ body in the tomb. This is a new story. It is a new story of Jesus – the resurrected Jesus – and it has *already begun* for him. He has left the scene of the last story. The new story is not situated in the garden, among the wreckage of the “old story”.

This new story of Jesus is already implied precisely by his absence. Mark flags it, but that is all. Instead, his entire focus is on the disciples. How will they respond? This is because the new story focuses on the disciples. It will be written by them in their response to the call of the risen Jesus to follow him.

The encounter with the “young man, dressed in a white robe” (16:5)

The women encounter a “young man, dressed (literally “wrapped”) in a white robe. He is neither the angel of Mathew’s story, nor the two men in “dazzling clothes” of Luke’s, who in both those stories “appear suddenly”. Nor does Mark tell us about the neatly rolled linen grave wrappings (as John does).

We have seen this “young man” before: he is the mysterious figure, present with the disciples at Jesus’ arrest, whose loincloth is seized by a guard, and who flees from Gethsemane, naked (14:51-52). He is otherwise unnamed and unidentified.

Is this stretching Mark’s symbol and imagery too far? It may be that Mark has simply

recorded an incident; there was an unidentified young man who was there and who fled, and of whom we know nothing else. Or it could be that the young man is actually Mark himself, as some Christian tradition has suggested. But Mark does not introduce random characters into his narrative without purpose; similarly, his passion narrative is saturated in symbol, as we have discovered. The Gethsemane story focuses on The Twelve who had been with him at the Passover meal, and who had protested their loyalty vehemently. There is no mention of anyone else present at the meal, least of all, the young man. Yet he appears mysteriously and is included in the story of Jesus' ultimate desertion by the disciples. And now, on Easter Sunday, we have the appearance of another mysterious "young man". It is difficult not to hear immediate echoes of the Gethsemane incident – particularly because Mark again makes a feature of his clothing.

As we saw already, Ched Myers suggests, compellingly, that we ought to see this "young man" as a symbol of the disciples. At Gethsemane, he flees with the disciples, leaving behind his loincloth. He embodies the faithlessness of the community of his disciples. Jesus is "wrapped" (clothed) in a linen grave-cloth by Joseph. Of this there is no sign on Easter morning (compare John's narrative at John 20:6-7); instead, the young man is "wrapped" in a long white cloth, recalling Mark's description of Jesus' robe becoming "dazzling white" at the transfiguration (9:3). White robes had, by the time Mark wrote, become the symbol of Christian martyrs.

We ought to see the clothing symbolising discipleship, in other words: the young man's loincloth in Gethsemane that is left behind so that he can flee represents the faithlessness of the disciples and their refusal to walk the Way of the Cross. Narratively, it is the same cloth purchased by Joseph in which he wraps the crucified Jesus in order to dispose of him in unseemly haste as an (unholy) act of Sabbath observance. Now, on Easter Sunday, the young man again represents discipleship – discipleship of the Jesus whose new story has already begun. But this time, he is dressed in Jesus' grave clothes, which have become for his followers a martyr's robe.

The third call to follow (16:6-8)

Mark presents Easter Sunday as the third call to follow Jesus. The first is by the lakeside (“Follow me and I will make you fish for people”); the second at Caesarea Philippi (“Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me”). In the tomb that is empty of Jesus, the women, who have followed Jesus faithfully to the cross (the end of that discipleship story) now hear Jesus’ third call to follow the risen Jesus. Three points need to be noted:

1. They hear it from the “young man in white”, who represents what discipleship of the risen Jesus will mean (ie martyrdom). This is the call to walk the Way of the Cross faithfully, instead of abandoning it/Jesus.
2. They are told to “tell the disciples and Peter”. Here is the clearest indication that the Easter story is a new story of discipleship. Mark has portrayed the collapse of the community of disciples in two stages: the disciples’ flight and Peter’s denial. The young man now issues the third call to follow in two stages: “Go and tell the disciples and Peter”. This is the call to the same disciples who have failed Jesus so spectacularly. The resurrection of the crucified Jesus means that their failure will not be the last word in the story of discipleship. If they will hear and respond, there is a new opportunity to share in the new story of Jesus.
3. They are to go back to Galilee, where it all started. This is where they will see the risen Jesus. The resurrection is not a “happy ending” to the story Mark has told, but the beginning of a new story of discipleship: the story is starting all over again.

Terror and amazement: the reaction of the women (16:8)

The abrupt ending of the gospel at 16:8 has puzzled and disturbed Mark’s readers

since the beginning. Indeed, so unsatisfactory and offensive has it seemed that two later endings were added in later manuscripts (16:8b and 16:9-20). There is no doubt, however, that neither of these were intended or written by Mark.

A recurring argument has been that there was originally a longer ending to the gospel that has been lost. NT Wright makes what is possibly the most credible defence of this thesis (*The Resurrection of the Son of God*, chapter 14). Two points count compellingly against it:

1. If it is the case that the ending has been lost, we cannot reconstruct it (as Wright and others do) and then use it as a basis for our reading of the closing verses of Mark's story. Quite simply, that is not the story that we have. Nor is importing or assuming an ending similar to that of the other gospels safe; we have already seen, from what we do have, that Mark tells his own story very differently, with different emphases.
2. The assumption of a lost ending derives from the abruptness and unlikelihood of the ending: Mark records only the terror and amazement of the women, their failure to "tell the disciples and Peter", and the fact that we do not know what happened as a result – whether "the disciples and Peter" "heard and followed". Yet we have seen that the entire thrust of the story at this point is to present Easter Sunday as a new story of Jesus that has already begun for him; the question is what part the disciples will play in it.

"Terror and amazement" are perfectly credible responses to the events that the women witness. Both are terms used by Mark to describe human responses to demonstration of powers beyond their control – storms, exorcisms, the threat of death, miracles, the transfiguration. This "new story" is terrifying and amazing: it is an act of God – of re-creation – that takes them into entirely new territory. Moreover, it is a reasonable response to the call to follow Jesus, given

what they have come to understand what “taking up the cross” means. It finds its echo in the reaction of Mark’s own readers, faced with the question of what discipleship of Jesus means in the context of the Great Revolt.

The unfinished story: a new story of discipleship

We do not know how the story ends – or rather, begins – because Mark does not tell us. But this is surely precisely his point: Mark wants his community (who knows what happened “a few minutes later” after his story ends) to put themselves in the shoes of the disciples – the first church – on that early Easter morning. Mark’s own community is hanging in the balance of whether to sell out to the Romans, embrace the messianic call to arms of the rebel recruiters, or follow the Jesus who did neither, but did not save himself. Jesus’ priority was not his survival. Faced with the call to follow by a young man who is dressed as a martyr; faced with the power of Rome, on the one hand, and the power of resurrection on the other, terror and amazement are both completely reasonable responses!

We make a huge mistake if we assume that “resurrection” in the context of this third call to discipleship is a source of comfort. Resurrection does not mean that we can avoid the confrontation and suffering of changing the world; if we are to follow the crucified Jesus faithfully, the resurrection means that we cannot flee when crucifixion looms. Gethsemane tells us that Jesus’ own faith in his vindication by God meant that the horror, terror and darkness of the Way of the Cross had to be faced rather than avoided; there was no other way of being faithful. That will be equally true for any of us who seek to respond to Jesus’ call to follow. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, reflecting on Mark 16:8, “When Christ calls a person, He bids them to come and die” (*The Cost of Discipleship*).

Mark’s unfinished narrative is his means of emphasising that the new story of Jesus that begins even earlier on Easter Sunday than the arrival of the women at the tomb is a new story of discipleship. It is a story that has content and credibility only to the extent that the disciples hear and respond. It is always, in every age and context, a “story waiting to be written” by the church – the community of disciples of Jesus.

This is the point that Mark labours, and which is always the moment of decision for the church. The church always hangs in the balance between being the faithful disciples who answer the new call to take up their crosses and follow, and the disciples who flee. Each of us as Mark's readers – individually and communally – is challenged to walk Jesus Way to the Kingdom – to be a visible demonstration of what the Kingdom is, rather than a baptised version of Empire. We are authentically the church to the extent that our lives and actions correlate to the story of Jesus that we tell. We are to be recognisably like Jesus – part of the Good News we proclaim. And we may prove to be faithless – to be part of the Bad News from which the world needs saving.

That is what should cause us “terror and amazement”. The call of the risen Jesus to follow presents us with an opportunity to follow that is as terrifying as it is wonderful. It is not a call to take up arms and fight; it is something more difficult. The Way that Jesus calls us to walk is never *less* costly than the way of armed revolt; there is no cross-free road for faithful disciples. Terror, amazement, a time to decide carefully, with eyes wide open to what we are signing up for: Mark intends us to understand that the Good News of Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, is a story that can only be written in the blood of the church.

Going deeper into the text (Mark 16: 1-8)

Like so many scenes from the gospels, this one has been all too romanticised by the church. It would have been a risky act for these women to demonstrate solidarity with so notorious a political dissident. But it was hardly a triumphant one. This dawn brought them only the numb duty of last respects and that aching, inconsolable emptiness that comes from hope crushed. This seems merely the last, pitiless leg of Mark's discipleship journey, ending at the cemetery of our dreams for a new world.

Cruelly, even the therapeutic ritual of weeping over Jesus' corpse and mustering brave eulogies is denied. The entrance to the makeshift tomb is sealed shut by a boulder that "was very large"(16:4). They halt in their tracks, pulled up short. "Who will roll away this stone?" they cry to no one in particular (16:3). This stone blocking their way terminates, without explanation, the discipleship journey. What an abrupt and bitter closure to the story! But there is one more scene in Mark's gospel, and upon it hinges the possibility of the Christian church.

The last word came from the enigmatic messenger: "Get up, go tell his disciples and Peter that he's going on ahead of you to Galilee. There you will see him, as he told you" (16:7). This young man, the symbol of the transformation from betrayal (nakedness) to discipleship (white robe) has issued the third call to discipleship (see 1:17, 8:34). It is a prospect the women, the reader, never considered. Our knees buckle at this invitation to resume the Way—for now we know its consequences all too well. From deep within us, from that unexplored space beneath our profoundest hopes and fears, roars a tidal wave of "trauma and ecstasy". Terrified, we race with the women out of that tomb as if we have just seen a ghost. And so we have. For in Jesus' empty tomb is nothing but the ghost of our discipleship past and our discipleship future. In Easter's first light, Mark's story ends as it began: "He is going before you . . ." (16:7)

We are promised that we will see Jesus again in Galilee, which is where the disciples were first called to follow! The narrative is circular! This epilogue presents us with the most dangerous of memories, a living one; the most subversive of stories, a never-ending one. Mark's resurrection tradition offers no visions of glory or triumph. It leaves us only with a God who hears our broken-hearted cries before the stone of impediment, and with the executed-but-risen-Nazarene who calls us to discipleship as many times as it takes. The third call is specifically directed to those whose discipleship became mired in the dead-end of denial: "Tell the disciples and Peter..." (16:7). There is no wayward journey that cannot be redeemed by new beginnings. That is why Dietrich Bonhoeffer insisted that the church must "recover a true understanding of the mutual relation between grace and discipleship." "And they

said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid" (16:28). What an ambiguous conclusion!

The narrative strategy of "they said nothing" has something else in mind. The genius of this "incomplete" ending, like a painting lacking the finishing stroke, is that it demands a response from its audience. Mark leaves us not with a neat resolution but with a terrible ultimatum. Who will tell this "good news"? For it is not only the women who "know", we know now as well. If we wish the story of discipleship to continue, we cannot remain mere spectators. Will we respond? If we are honest, we will admit that the cross is so intimidating, and our blindness so pervasive, that we can only answer, "We believe; help us in our unbelief!" (9:24). Even our best efforts at faithfulness seem inevitably to founder. But all that is part of the story, too. For it is at the point of failure and of disillusionment that the invitation comes again. Then our discipleship journey either truly ends or truly begins.

"To see again" is Mark's master metaphor for a faith that looks more deeply into reality in order to see what could be. We might translate it literally: "to revision." In Mark's Easter narrative, the weary old story of the world, in which the powers always win and the poor always lose, is radically revised. But we can "see" this only in "Galilee," the symbolic site of discipleship. Mark's story began in the wilderness, far from the centres of power and privilege. To that location the disciples are urged to return.

"The women looked again and found that the stone had been rolled away" (16:4). We too are invited to look again and see that a way has been opened up—a way that carries us toward life. A way was opened for the women to prepare the body of Jesus and to follow the risen one to Galilee. A way has been opened for us as well to bind the wounds of our world. In a place of death, a new beginning is offered. As in Peter's case, our failed discipleship can be redeemed by grace.

Death and resurrection, brokenness and healing, marginalisation and empowerment, sin and reconciliation, injustice and transformation all shape the very pattern of the

Christian life. Resurrection is gratuitous - a pure, unearned gift of God. It is the ultimate test of and the only hope for a disciple's faith. At the same time, we are called by the Spirit to eke out the resurrection bit by bit, step by step on the Way. Sometimes our experience of resurrection is glorious and clear. But most often it is the fruit of long, painful labour - birthed, but needing to be nurtured.

Ched Meyers et al (1996) "Say it to this Mountain": Mark's Story of Discipleship

All age worship ideas (Mark 16: 1-8)

One of the keys to good all age worship is to keep it simple and relatively short. Ideally aim for a service of 45-50 minutes. That's not to say a service can't be longer but if you are thinking of 1hr30+ think carefully about your use of space and above all else be creative, take risks and have fun – partying is integral to the kingdom but we'll leave that for a year on Luke...

Reflection – the author of Mark's gospel is keen to point out that Jesus was very open to his friends that this journey they shared would culminate in his dying and rising. On each occasion the disciples are confused and fail to understand looking for metaphor rather than literal understanding. Now post-death they have had to face the fact that certainly in terms of his death Jesus was right. The challenge that awaits them now is whether they can accept the whole picture he foretold and embrace his 'rising'.

The figure in the tomb instructs the women to tell Jesus friends to go on and meet Jesus in Galilee as he said – an acknowledgement of Jesus' words in Mark 14.

After the devastation and disappointment of the crucifixion, against all odds the 'Way' is back on. Everything has changed – and both the women and the disciples of Jesus have to make a decision about how they will respond.

This is game-changing for us today because the challenge of the empty tomb is like a claxon for the church to embrace the idea of the improbable and the seemingly impossible. Things can change for the better and when we follow the Jesus who has gone ahead of us and trust in the help of the Spirit he sends we can be both the catalyst and the agents of that change.

Jeff Goldblum in the movie Jurassic Park delivers the famous line when challenging Richard Attenborough's belief that the dinosaurs can be controlled and will not breed 'Life always finds a way'. He is proved right...

This is the same message Jesus has been drip-feeding into his friends – death will happen but life will find a way beyond it. This is our good news.

Idea – Either use a play tent or a frame (clothes horse/maiden) and cover it with a sheet to create a makeshift tomb. Create a stone from card or use something like a gym ball. Invite any young or old people to enter into the tomb and bring out one thing they find. Inside have ready strips of cloth with the verses below written one on each (they can be any preferred translation rather than those below) Once all the verses are collected invite the holders to read them out:

*He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days **rise** again. Mark 8.31*

⁹*As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what "rising from the dead" meant. Mark 9.9-10*

*He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will **rise**." Mark 9.31*

³ “We are going up to Jerusalem,” he said, “and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles,³⁴ who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.”

Mark 10.33-35

²⁷ “You will all fall away,” Jesus told them, “for it is written:

“I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered.”^[a]

²⁸ But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.” Mark 14.27-28

Prayer – Going away from the ‘mock’ tomb roll out a length of lining paper according to the number of people in the congregation. Have some paints and rollers to hand and invite people to come and place their footprints on the paper along with their name as a sign of their first, or on-going, commitment to follow Jesus and be part of his Way.

Have some ready cut feet for those who are unable to do the paint activity and give them space to add their cut-out footprints to the collage.

You could have music playing or sing songs like ‘Will you come and follow me?’ (R&S558); ‘Today, I choose’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rSOQQVvHwJI> ; ‘Here I am Lord (I the Lord of sea and sky)’ (MP857)

Liturgies and hymns (Mark 16: 1-8)

This is where you can find hymn suggestions and liturgies for use with this week's text.

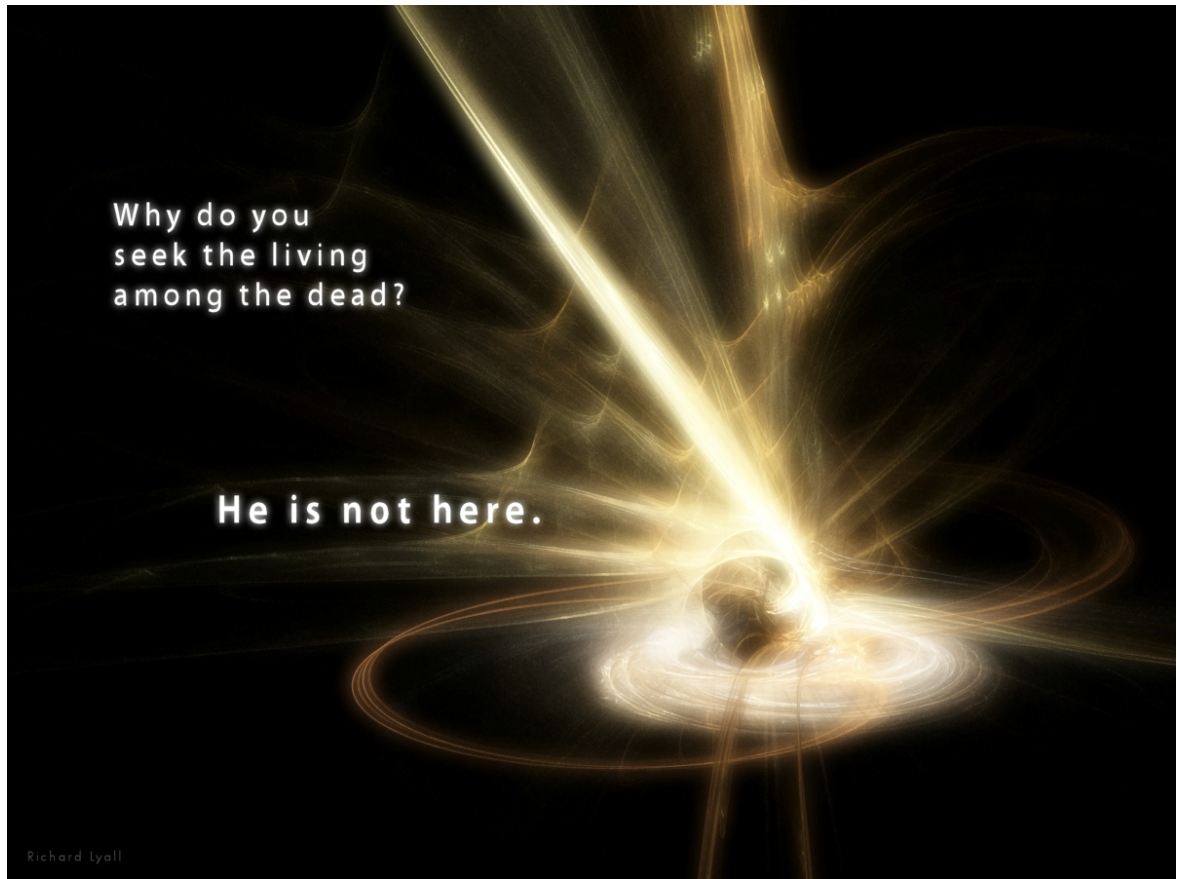
Opening Prayer for Easter Sunday

Creator of Life,
in raising Christ Jesus
up, through, out of, and beyond
the chains of death,
You opened for us the way
to eternal and abundant life.

May our Alleluias on this day
float high above the ceiling
of what we think we know
and transcend to the heaven of
what we believe—
and thus live.

Raise us up!
Renew our lives!
Resurrect our dreams!
Through Jesus Christ our Living Savior,
Amen.

~ written by Karen Turner, and posted on
the **Lifeway** website. http://www.lifeway.com/lwc/files/lwcF_PDF_LW_MaundyThursday.pdf



When everything was dark
and it seemed that the sun would never shine again,
your love broke through.

Your love was too strong,
too wide,
too deep
for death to hold.

The sparks cast by your love
dance and spread
and burst forth
with resurrection light.

Gracious God,

we praise you for the light of new life
made possible through Jesus.

We praise you for the light of new life
that shone on the first witnesses of resurrection.

We praise you for the light of new life
that continues to shine in our hearts today.

We pray that the Easter light of life, hope and joy,
will live in us each day;
and that we will be bearers of that light
into the lives of others.

Amen.

Michaela Youngson, Superintendent Minister of the Ealing Trinity Circuit,

The image at the top of this post is by Richard Lyall. He has made this image
available for non-commercial use in worship.

Salvation Prayer

God who created us suffers because of us
God who died upon the cross suffers for us
God who dwells with us suffers with us
And in God's suffering we find hope

God, your suffering brings us salvation
Without you the horrors of human suffering would be unbearable
Your story of life, death and resurrection gives life meaning
Your suffering frees us from our prisons

Because of your suffering a new world is breaking into ours

May we live this day in the knowledge of your pain

May we live this day in the assurance of your love

May we live this day in the hope of the resurrection.

Today.

(written by Christine Sine, and posted on

the **Godspace** website. <http://godspace.wordpress.com/>)

Prayer

Lord Jesus,

you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross,
that all people might come within the reach of your saving embrace.

Clothe us in your Spirit, that we,

stretching out our hands in loving service for others,

may bring those who do not know you to an awareness and love of you;

who with the Father and the Holy Spirit live and reign,

One God forever! Amen!

~ C.H.Brent (1862-1929 AD)

Prayer for Others on Easter Morning

O God, with faces touched by the light of a new day,

and hearts warmed by our prayers and praises,

we come before you to pray

for the needs of our world.

Into the light of Easter morning

we raise those who are struggling with illness,

with despair over their lives, or with

the breakdown of relationships.

May the light of Christ shine upon them.

May the light of Christ shine upon them.

Into the light of Easter morning,
we bring those places in our world
where war, violence, poverty and need
are the experiences of everyday life.

(These places may be named)

May the light of Christ shine upon them.

May the light of Christ shine upon them.

Into the light of Easter morning,
we bring the headline news of this weekend

(this may be named):

we hold in our hearts the pain
of those suffering violence, bereavement or conflict.

May the light of Christ shine upon them.

May the light of Christ shine upon them.

And into the light of Easter morning
we bring ourselves, the private struggles,
the heart's yearnings, the hidden dreams,
the unfulfilled potential.

May the light of Christ shine upon us.

May the light of Christ shine upon us. AMEN.

(written by Ann Siddall, and posted on the website of the Stillpoint Spirituality
Centre. <http://www.stillpointsa.org.au/>)

Communion for Easter Sunday ([see attachments](#))

Hymn Suggestion

MARY MAGDALENE & OTHERS

Tune: Bunessan

1. Faithful to Jesus, serving him always
up hill and down dale through Galilee -
women unnoticed, quietly supporting;
Mary and others helping him be.
2. Jesus arrested - followers scattered -
men with their big mouths cannot be found;
women remaining watch Jesus dying,
Mary and others standing their ground.
3. All hope now faded - only a body,
cold and disfigured - Jesus is dead.
women still caring watching him buried;
Mary and others - nothing is said.
4. Huddled together carrying spices
(still serving Jesus in a cold tomb)
women in mourning doing their duty -
Mary and others lost in the gloom.
5. New hope surprises (alarming, unsettling)
"Jesus is living - risen today!"
These friends so faithful can't take the good news;
Mary and others running away.
6. God of renewal, hope and surprises,
you love the quiet faith of a friend:

yet you would bless us with new beginnings,
Mary and others need what you send!

A FUTURE for the FRIGHTENED

Tune: "You shall go out..."

1. On resurrection day the women ran away,
& the story of God's love was left uncompleted -
yet to all who fear, risen Jesus comes near
so that they'll live out his love.
So the story will only be complete,
(with the balance just right, the ending neat)
Jesu's story will only be complete,
if we live out his love.
2. "If Jesus you would see, then go to Galilee",
and begin to live the life you've left uncompleted.
In the daily grind, risen Jesus we'll find
as we all live out his love.
As we work to ensure that justice's done,
as we offer our all 'til love has won,
then each day we will know God's risen Son,
as we live out his love.
3. Do not procrastinate, the time is getting late,
and each moment must be used that's still uncompleted
We can start right now - risen Jesus shows how -
let us all live out his love.
If we each follow Jesus day by day,
let the presence of God chase fear away,

then our story completes what God would say,
as we live out his love.

AN EASTER DAY COMMUNION HYMN

Tune: Day of Rest

1. The feast begun in shadow
is now diffused with light;
betrayal and denial
are through Your death put right -
now mighty resurrection
invites us all to share
as guests around Your table -
forgiven - welcomed here!
2. Like Peter and the others
we fail or sneak away;
we help to crucify You -
forgive us, Lord, we pray -
but through Your resurrection,
Your vict'ry in the strife,
with Mary and Joanna
we now receive new life!
3. We, too, walk with Cleopas,
confused and in despair;
today, as in Emmaus,
oh, Risen Lord, be near!
Sit with us at this table;
set hearts on fire for You -
let Easter joy empow'r us
each day our whole lives through

