

Prayer

Glorious and powerful Lord, we praise You for the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. You have done for us far more than we could have asked or dreamt! We honour You and worship You with unconfined joy and happiness, and ask You to rekindle this joy within us each and every day of our lives, so that we may live as people of resurrection joy! AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: The Gospel

In this week following Easter, we will pray for the spreading of the Gospel, The Gospel is expressed in different ways, but it is available because of the resurrection of our Lord. Pray that joy, love, happiness, peace and grace, and all the results of Christ's victory over evil and death may be preached and demonstrated by Christians throughout the world, on this special day.

Meditation

All praise to You Lord God Almighty

For You have raised Jesus Christ from the dead!

The bigotry which killed Christ has been overcome;
For love is more powerful than hate!

Death is not the end for those who love You;
For the power of death is destroyed!

The Kingdom has been battered by evil which has failed;
And now it is triumphant in Jesus!

The law has done its work, exposing the world's sins;
And a new work of grace has begun!

Satan has done everything to prevent God's triumph,
But His power has now been shattered!

On this awesome, wondrous and happy day,

Lord God, You have brought new life to this world!

Bible Study - Mark 16:1-8

¹ When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint Him. ² Very early, when the sun had risen on the first day of the week, they went to the tomb. ³ They had been asking each other, 'Who will roll away the stone from the entrance to the tomb for us?' ⁴ When they were close enough to see it, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. ⁵ As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. ⁶ 'Do not be alarmed,' he said, 'you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. Look at the place where they laid Him!' ⁷ But go, tell His disciples and Peter that He is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see Him there, just as He told you.' ⁸ So they got out of the tomb and fled from it, for they were gripped with terror and amazement. They said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Review

For Christian people the world over, the day of Resurrection is a truly special and unique day celebrated with a variety of special festivities. Most of these celebrations naturally involve

special foods, which remind us that the origins of our celebrations lie in 'feast' days when special foods were eaten. For many people today, Easter has become a feast of chocolate, but there are many countries which still celebrate Easter with other rich foods which indicate the superabundant and wonderful provision of God which brings life out of death, and enables love to be victorious over all evil.

All the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John tell us the wonderful story of Jesus' resurrection, and although there are differences there are also many common themes. Each Gospel tells us that Jesus was raised bodily from the dead, and gives us eye-witness evidence that this is so; and they tell us the powerful and diverse stories of those caught up in those momentous events. Surprisingly, he tells us the story of the resurrection from the point of view of Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses and Salome (see also 15:40), but not the experience of others who ventured to the tomb such as Peter (as in John 20:1-10). It is no surprise that different stories circulated about what happened to all those who went to the tomb, as can be seen by reading all the Gospel resurrection stories (Matt 28:1f., Mark 16:1f., Luke 24:1f., and John 20:1f.). What happened was phenomenal and earth-shattering, and it should come as no surprise to us that people were, for a little time, confused.

Our reading today can be split into two halves; the discovery of the empty tomb by the women followed by the words of the angel telling them what to do. The three women began by making their way to the tomb, fully prepared to perform the funeral rites for the body of Jesus (16:2). They were cautious, however, because they were uncertain about how they might gain access to Jesus' body, given that Joseph had set a heavy stone across the tomb entrance (16:3); a stone such as this could not normally be moved once it was set in place. So initially, the sight of the stone's removal may have been something of a relief, giving them access to the tomb; but they could not find Jesus' body! What they saw was something like a vision, but it was real! They saw a 'young man in white' (16:5) sitting in the tomb. The whole scenario would have been shocking to the women.

In those moments of tension and perhaps even panic, the women heard the young man speak. As people of their time, they would have perceived him as an angel, a messenger of God who had something to say to them of great importance. The young man first called on them not to be 'alarmed' (a rare Greek word that probably means something like 'dumfounded', or 'stupefied'). He called on the women not to be afraid, a common feature of messages from God (see also Gen 21:17, 1 Kings 1:15 etc.). He then took up the women's concerns, saying; 'you are looking for Jesus ... He is not here!' (16:6) and by saying 'He is risen!' he pointed to the women to look at 'the place where they laid Him' (16:6). We, too, get the clear message; Jesus had gone! The young man then said that Jesus was awaiting the disciples in Galilee (16:7), as He had told them previously on the Mount of Olives (14:28). This is important, because the disciples knew Jesus had said this, and would therefore be confident that the message was indeed from the Lord.

The words of the young man are especially interesting because they are like a summary of Mark's Gospel. It was written for those who were looking to find the real Jesus, and Jesus is indeed risen! Moreover, the evidence of Jesus' life and death was all around for people to discover and talk about if they had faith. In addition, this word says that Jesus' followers should be obedient and do His. It is a concise summary of discipleship!

At the time, however, it was understandably all too much for the women, and they fled from the tomb. Mark says that they were 'gripped with terror' (16:8) and failed to tell anyone, but this sets up the scene for what happened next, which we will look at tomorrow. We also know that others had a different perspective on what happened, so we may be assured that although we are near to the end of the gospel, it was not the end of the story.

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Try to imagine yourself in the position of the women present at the resurrection. Discuss this in your group.

2. Why do you think that the women were not filled with joy, as we are today, at the resurrection?
3. Discuss the importance and significance of Jesus calling the disciples to leave Jerusalem and meet Him in Galilee.

Discipleship

For the last few weeks I have suggested that you keep a diary of the feelings of Jesus about all that was happening to Him. Today, it is worth reflecting on what God the Father may have felt at the resurrection. You could say, 'how presumptuous of us!' but I reckon that God would be delighted for us to try to imagine how these things affected Him. The resurrection is all about connecting heaven and earth!

Final Prayer

Lord God Almighty, bless all those who do not know what to make of the resurrection. Some need to have it explained to them, or some may truly fear death and the whole idea of an empty tomb. Break open the way for all people to hear the Gospel and have the chance to respond to the 'Gospel of God!' AMEN