

**Worship for First Sunday after Easter - 11th
April 2021**

from Brian & Clare Kennard

Jesus says, "Stop doubting and believe!" (John 20:27)



Hymn suggestion: He has risen!

HE HAS RISEN,

He has risen,

He has risen,

Jesus is alive.

When the life flowed from His body,
Seemed like Jesus' mission failed.
But His sacrifice accomplished,
Victory over sin and hell.

In the grave God did not leave Him,
For His body to decay;
Raised to life, the great awakening,
Satan's power He overcame.

If there were no resurrection,
We ourselves could not be raised;
But the Son of God is living,
So our hope is not in vain.

When the Lord rides out of heaven,
Mighty angels at His side,
They will sound the final trumpet,
From the grave we shall arise.

He has given life immortal,
We shall see Him face to face;
Through eternity we'll praise Him,
Christ, the Champion of our faith.

Prayer time:

Be still and focus on the awesome God we serve: great beyond all words, but revealing Himself through His Word, and most clearly through the Word who became flesh - the Lord Jesus Christ. Rejoice that ours is not a dead religion that we serve, but a risen, active, living Saviour! Express your adoration, worship and praise in whatever ways you can.

Prayer for today ("Collect"):

Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ's Body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Bible readings:

If you have your own Bible, please read: **Psalm 133**

New Testament: **John 20: 19-31**

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'

Jesus appears to Thomas

²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus^l), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.'

²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.'

²⁸ Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!'

²⁹ Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'

The purpose of John's gospel

³⁰ Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Meditation

"Stop doubting and believe!" (John 20:27)

Many people today- and at the time- would like to dismiss the resurrection of Jesus as a fairy tale: a nice happy ending, but with no substance in fact. Just to show that this skepticism is not based on any new/educated/scientific way of thinking, look- for example- at the reception the apostle Paul got in Athens (Acts 17:16 onwards). Some just couldn't fathom what he was talking about at all and foolishly concluded Paul was trying to introduce to them two foreign gods, one called Jesus and the other called Resurrection. Most kept with him until he explained to them that Jesus was alive from the dead (v31), at which point "some of them sneered" and only "a few believed".

It's true of course that we are talking of a remarkable event, something completely out of the ordinary. It's also true that there are inconsistencies in the details of the accounts in the four Gospels, though all agree on the main point - the tomb was empty and the risen Jesus made Himself known to his followers. It was this testimony that enabled these defeated, frightened men and women to boldly proclaim the Good News of a Living Saviour to a hostile world. In most cases the first disciples were martyred (executed) for maintaining their faith, something which nobody would do for what they knew was a pack of lies!

Much more could be written if I had the space, but

let me end with the application to us today. **"Stop doubting and believe!"** is much more than a demand to accept the testimony of those first disciples, to trust the Bible account. It is also the Risen Christ calling each one of us to trust that He is with us, leading us, helping us, inspiring us and filling us with His life and His Spirit in the here and now. This is not a fairy story, it is a Glory story, Praise the Lord! Amen!

Prayer time.

Pray that the Easter message of eternal life in Jesus and hope for the present may be proclaimed around the world - and in Gartree- in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In your own words, remember before God...those in authority in this country and around the world grappling with the present crisis and the many other difficult problems humanity faces....all those "on the front line" whether NHS staff, transport workers, shop workers, the emergency services...those most personally affected by the Covid-19 outbreak: the bereaved, those seriously ill, those who have already lost their jobs.. the Church of Jesus Christ as together we seek to witness to the love and care of God in word and action....that people everywhere would recognise that those of every race and language are made in the image of God and that we are all one in Christ...and for yourself and your family. Remember, too, thankfulness!

The Lord's Prayer (traditional version):

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done; .
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The blessing: Now may the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with and remain with us always. Amen.