

Easter Sunday Evening:

Order of Service

6.00 pm

Welcome and Intimations

CALL to WORSHIP

PRAISE MP 338: In the Cross of Christ I glory.

Prayer

PRAISE MP45: At your feet we fall

Scripture Readings: Luke 24: 13-33

PRAISE KP 5: How deep the Father's love for us

Meditation: *'On the Emmaus Road.'*

PRAISE MP 647: The head that once was crowned with thorns

Prayers of Intercession

Offering and Dedication

PRAISE KP 8: In Christ alone

Blessing and Benediction

Threefold Amen

FULL Order of Service

Welcome and Intimations

CALL to WORSHIP

We are here to rejoice! We are here to give thanks! We are here to worship God, the giver of life!

For today, we remember that day which transformed the course of history and which, across the years, has transformed countless human lives.

Easter day - the day in which evil, sorrow and suffering, even death itself, were finally defeated; a day that makes every day, every moment, a new beginning.

Let us listen afresh, tonight, to the words of Scripture, and let us listen as we walk with the two on the road to Emmaus.

Let us enter into the experience of those who witnessed the empty tomb and the risen Christ!

For the message they heard, the good news they celebrated was not just for them, but for us, and for all.

So, LET US WORSHIP GOD -

PRAISE MP 338: In the Cross of Christ I glory.

Prayer: LET US PRAY -

We thank you, Father God, that you raised your Son Jesus from death, and that his life means we too can live with him for ever more. We pray for those who haven't yet discovered that he is alive today, and we pray that they will know the evidence of the empty tomb and meet with him.

Almighty God, today is the most special of days - a day of victory, celebration and praise!

A day on which we remember your great triumph - the defeat of evil, suffering and death.

A day on which we recall the transformation you have brought - joy after sorrow, hope after despair, faith after doubt.

A day on which we give thanks for all you have given us - love, laughter, life!

Almighty God,

Forgive us that we lose sight of those truths.

We are so quick to become disheartened.

We so easily forget all you have done for us.

Forgive us for the limits we set upon your love.

Forgive the feebleness of our response.

Forgive the smallness of our vision.
Speak to us through this joyful season, and fill us with greater trust and deeper faith.
So may we live not just this day but every day as your Easter people, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray together, saying:

*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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation. but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory. For ever. Amen.*

PRAISE MP45: At your feet we fall

Scripture Reading: Luke 24: 13-33 (from Reading Rota)

PRAISE KP 5: How deep the Father's love for us

MEDITATION: 'On the Emmaus Road.' Easter Evening

Prayer for Illumination:

Lord Jesus Christ, as we travel along the path with you, and meditate on your word, draw near to us, walk with us, open up your Word about the things concerning yourself that our hearts may burn within us this Easter morning. Hear our prayer in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

INTRODUCTION:

They had just left the big city where it had all happened! The big and bright lights, the hub and the excitement - the centre of all that ever happened!

And centre it certainly was! And happen - it most certainly had!
Lost in their own thoughts and misery, the two friends walked together towards their village. Sometimes talking, sometimes in silence.

Perhaps, if they had known beforehand, they'd never have set foot inside the city! Perhaps, they would have tried even harder to stop him from going there! But they hadn't known! Hadn't realised!
Perhaps they should have known - or, at least guessed - worked it out! But how could they? Surely, no one could have foreseen what was about to happen?

AT FIRST:

They had all gone, and AT FIRST, it looked as if it was all going to be a roaring success! Everyone, it seemed had turned out to greet him that first day - lining the streets on either side, laying down coats and palm branches before him - shouting and singing praises - 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' and how they had waved - right into the city itself! It was as if they had put out the red carpet to welcome their King!

IT WAS AFTER THAT

It was after that, the two men decided, that things had begun to go wrong. There was that day in the Temple - he had become so angry and began shouting at the traders and cheats, overturning their tables, sending pigeons and all sorts flying - "My Father's House is a house of prayer!" he shouted, "You have made it a den of robbers!"

Oh yes, that was when they really began to turn against him! That was when the rot set in! It had really only been a matter of time, after that, hadn't it?

BETRAYAL!

But to end the way it had! One of their own! Sold him out to the opposition! Why? How could he?

Then, there had been the mockery of a trial - and even worse - they had all deserted him, denied him, just when he needed them most! He hadn't fought back; hadn't tried to defend himself - it was as if he was giving himself up to them! Then the crowd - the same crowd who had cheered and sang that first day, began baying for his death - "Crucify him! Crucify him!" they had shouted. Then they chose to free a murderer rather than him. How could that have happened?

NOW ALONE, TOGETHER:

And now, here they were, alone, walking away together - away from that awful place where they had crucified Jesus. They could still hardly believe it! They had seen it with their own eyes, yet how could it be true?

He had been taken from them! They'd never see him again! All their hopes and dreams dashed! Never had they known sorrow like it! In their despair, these two men on the road to Emmaus could see no silver lining, no glint of joy or hope on the horizon.

Oh yes, some of the women had come to them with this amazing tale about Jesus being alive, of seeing angels and finding no body in the tomb, the stone rolled away! And sure enough, some of the disciples had gone to the tomb and had found it empty! But they had seen nothing! They hadn't found Jesus! Just an empty tomb!

And now they were filled with all kinds of questions and doubts. What had it all meant? Why did Jesus have to die on a cross? And what had happened to his body?

Was he alive? How could he be? They had seen him die! The questions crowded in on them.

LIFE for US:

And isn't that just what life is like for us today, without Jesus? These two men walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus throw the spotlight on to what life would be like without Christ - a life overwhelmed when grief came, clouded by doubts of all kinds, a life devoid of meaning and purpose!

But as they walked, they were joined by another. . . . and now they are three. And they begin to unburden themselves - for it seems this stranger knows nothing of the events of the last few days. They speak of their sorrow and grief, the whole story tumbling out, even to the scatter-brained idea that Jesus was alive!

What a comfort to be able to tell someone else, and someone who was listening so intently, so seemingly 'in-tune' with them.

THE SHOCK THEY NEEDED:

But then came the shock they needed, shaking them out of their preoccupation with their own grief. This stranger, who had listened so intently to them, now begins to speak - and how!

He says none of things they might have expected him to say. No words of pity for their sorrow and grief - at least, not in the way you would expect.

No! Their companion turns to them and says: " How dull you are! So thick-headed! How slow to believe all that the prophets said! Was the Messiah not bound to suffer thus before entering upon his glory?"

And then, beginning with Moses and all the Prophets he explains to them the passages which refer to the Messiah in every part of the Scriptures.

Strange as it may seem, neither of them ask him who he thinks he is to talk to them like that. Instead, they cling to every word. There is something about what he says and the way he says it - there is a

power, an authority which holds them spellbound! They want to hear more!

LIFE WITH CHRIST for US:

And life with Christ can be like this for you and me today. Christ brings us the comfort we need. He draws near to us as we walk through life, and he goes with us. Christ is always there, always willing to listen, always ready to share and carry our burdens; always ready to explain to us what God is saying to us. He is always willing to teach us in the ways of God, in the Word of God and in the life God has given us - we need only listen.

But there is still more!

ARRIVAL at EMMAUS:

By this time, they have reached Emmaus where they are going. Jesus makes to go on, but the two men urge him to stay with them as it is getting dark and he will be hungry.

Only then does Christ go in with them - at their invitation. And it is as he breaks the bread and offers it to them that they finally realise who this stranger is - no stranger, but Christ himself. It is in the simple act of breaking bread, an action he had done so many times with his disciples - and especially so recently at the last Supper in the Upper Room - that Christ makes himself known to them. He reminds them of the previous meals they have shared and in so doing he reveals his presence to them!

HE MEETS with US TODAY:

And this is how Christ still meets and reveals himself to us today -
by
reminding us of his presence in some well-known, familiar action or
saying

- in some easily recognisable way - easy for us, that is, if we are prepared to meet with him and invite him in.

It may be in the touch of a hand, in the word of sympathy from a friend or stranger, it may be in the familiar activities of every day - Christ is there, waiting for us to ask him in.

Christ is always there, always ready, always willing to come to us, walk with us, comfort, teach, strengthen, encourage us - but we must invite him to do so.

CONCLUSION:

And so, as well as showing us what life would be like without Jesus, these two disciples on the road to Emmaus, also project the spotlight on to what life is with Christ!

The moment of recognition comes to these two disciples and they say to one another - "Did we not feel our hearts on fire as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us? And then, without a moments hesitation, forgetting their hunger - they set out to return to Jerusalem - they want to tell the others that Jesus is alive and how he came to them!

In that moment of recognition, their lives are changed. Life becomes

full of meaning; life takes on a new radiance; they become alive to the Gospel and went out to tell others!

That experience on the road, in the breaking of bread, has given their life new meaning - they now have something, someone to live for. And living for Christ means passionate evangelism and radiant living!

Is that how it is for you and me? Have our lives been changed since we met with Christ? Since we recognised him in our lives? Have we felt our hearts burn within us? Have we gone out without a moments

delay with him, to others? Do we glow with that inner light that only comes from Christ?

So tonight, how do we walk along?

Do we walk alone - letting Christ walk by unnoticed, unrecognised?
Or do we walk with Christ and for Christ, our hearts aflame with the love of God?

He is there, waiting for your invitation and mine. **Amen.**

PRAISE MP 647: The head that once was crowned with thorns

Prayers of Intercession: LET US PRAY -

In the joy of this Easter evening let us pray to the God who loves us completely. We pray that the joy and conviction of Christians may be so radiant that all who are lost, weary and searching may be directed towards your lasting, inner peace
Silence.

Risen Lord, *live in us, we pray.*

We pray that from every world crisis and tragedy some good may come; every problem become an opportunity for development and spiritual growth.

Especially, we pray for the leaders and people of the Middle East - Syria, Iraq, the Yemen, for Russia; and we pray for all places where tensions run high, where the innocent are caught in the crossfire; where people go hungry; flee to refugee

camps and where hope is all but dead.

Silence.

Risen Lord, *live in us, we pray.*

We pray for the newly born and for all families, that the children may be loved and nurtured, and the elderly cherished through your wide, accepting love.

Silence.

Risen Lord, *live in us, we pray.*

We pray that those in mental, physical or spiritual distress that they may recognise your presence with them, your healing love surrounding them and holding them.

Especially tonight, we pray, in the silence now, for those You have laid on our hearts tonight, who need your healing, your comfort, and your peace
Silence.

Risen Lord, *live in us, we pray.*

Father, bless and restore all who turn to you in their need.
And for your abundant blessings, we give you praise and thanks.
Silence.

Risen Lord, *live in us, we pray.*

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our saviour
Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Offering and Dedication: LET US PRAY -

Heavenly father,
It was when Jesus broke the bread that he was given that the disciples saw who he was.
Accept the gifts that we offer to you now, and with them accept our lives as well. May all that we have and are be used so that others may see Jesus. **Amen**

PRAISE KP 8: In Christ alone

Blessing and Benediction

Now may the Son who redeemed us, the Spirit who renews us, and the Father who receives us, for so great is his love, be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us.

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and with all whom you love, this day and for ever more

Threefold Amen