



**Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> April - 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter**

**At Home Worship**

**Unless I.....**



### **Call to worship**

Come if you're healthy, come if you're hurt.  
Come if you're hopeful, come if you're sad.  
Let God's light shine upon you.  
Let God's life fill you.  
Let God bring you healing and hope today.

### **A gathering prayer**

In the middle of our busy lives, **we seek Jesus.**  
In our caring and providing,  
in dreaming and hoping, **we seek Jesus.**  
In our seeking after truth  
and our longing to know more fully, **we seek Jesus.**

In the troubles of the world, in conflict and distress, **we come to find peace.**  
In our challenges and our hopes, in all we wish was different, **we come to find peace.**

When we don't know the answers,  
when we don't know what is true,  
in all our searching and longing,  
**Jesus, meet us we pray. Amen.**

### **Prayer of Adoration**

God of all the world,  
we believe in the fact that you created us,  
we believe in the fact that you love us,  
we believe in the fact that your Son died for us –  
even when it seems too good to be true,  
even when we long for a deeper encounter,  
even though there is so much that is mystery.  
We believe that you are our God,  
and we praise and adore you,  
in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

**Worship Song. See what a morning!** Songwriters: Townend Stuart Christopher Andrew / Getty Julian Keith [See What a Morning \(Resurrection Hymn - 6vv\) \[with lyrics for congregations\] - YouTube](#)

See, what a morning, gloriously bright,  
With the dawning of hope in Jerusalem;  
Folded the grave-clothes, 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.  
Honor and blessing, glory and praise  
To the King crowned with pow'r 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!

## A prayer of confession – We say Sorry to God

Lord, you give us life.  
But there are times we don't live life the way you wish us to.  
When pain has us in its grip, we may give in to the gloom of pessimism.  
Forgive us when we see only the gloomy downside of situations.  
Forgive us when circumstances take over and moaning is easier than fighting.  
Dark times sap our strength and courage and blind us to your light.  
Renew our strength to fight our way into your healing light.  
**Forgive us and rekindle the light of hope in these times, Lord, that all shall be well.**  
**Amen.**

## Assurance of forgiveness

Through the blood of the Lamb, we are forgiven and cleansed.  
Let us praise God for his Son, the Lamb,  
who through the cross paid the price for our sins.  
Thanks be to the Lamb of God.  
**Amen.**

## Prayer for the Day

Risen Christ,  
for whom no door is locked, no entrance barred:  
open the doors of our hearts,  
that we may seek the good of others  
and walk the joyful road of sacrifice and peace,  
to the praise of God the Father. Amen

## Bible passage

### John 20:19-31 New International Version



#### Jesus Appears to His Disciples

<sup>19</sup> 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!" <sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

<sup>21</sup> Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." <sup>22</sup> And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

#### Jesus Appears to Thomas

<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas (also known as Didymus<sup>[a]</sup>), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> 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.”

<sup>26</sup> 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!” <sup>27</sup> 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.”

<sup>28</sup> Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

<sup>29</sup> 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

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

## Reflection by Angela Mak



I wonder what frightens you? I dislike flying 14h to visit our daughter and family in Singapore, but I choose to do it because of the wonderful reward at the end. It’s not so much the danger of being at 30,000ft; but feeling trapped inside a ‘metal box with all the doors closed!!’ Why can’t we open a window?! Many people cannot fly though because of a fear of heights - acrophobia.

*(Taken from writing of Tyler Staton.) Early on a hot summer morning in 1974 Philippe Petit walked across a wire suspended between the iconic Twin Towers dotting the Lower Manhattan skyline. It was an incredible spectacle! Almost exactly 27 years later, two commercial flights were hijacked and steered directly into those same Twin Towers, bringing them to the ground with thousands of casualties. That was also a spectacle—of the very worst kind. A [photo](#) was snapped during Petit’s jaunt across the wire that was meaningless for nearly three decades, but then became iconic: a commercial plane caught behind the balancing man on the wire appears to be flying much too low, almost like it will hit the towers. Two moments that seem logically a lifetime apart, are caught in a single frame. The stories overlap for just a moment.*

*That’s what happened to Thomas. The story of the world and the story of Jesus seemed incompatible on resurrection morning. For just a moment, the stories overlapped in a small upper room hideaway in central Jerusalem. Thomas, disenchanted by an empty tomb, encountered the presence of the living God.*

The disciple Thomas has perhaps been harshly labelled as ‘Doubting Thomas’. A better description might be a ‘Seeking Thomas’. Thomas was deeply sad at the loss of his friend, and the loss of his anticipated world with the Messiah in it. He was also fearful of being attacked or killed as a follower of Jesus. But Thomas responds to loss and fear, by **seeking a personal encounter with the risen Lord Jesus**. We might say that Thomas is straddling a tightrope between his hard questions and loss, and Jesus himself. Thomas is choosing to look in the direction of Jesus.

What do we know about Thomas? A loyal and honest disciple. Rather than faltering on the periphery, Thomas was ‘all in’ for Jesus. At an earlier occasion recorded in John 11, Jesus’ friend Lazarus had died and he was wanting to return to Lazarus’ town Bethany in Judea. However, the disciples knew that Jesus had a bounty on his head and hence did not want him to go. Thomas’ belief in Jesus was so strong that he said ‘let’s go with Jesus that we might die with him!’ Thomas lived through many miracles; in the remote countryside feeding the thousands from barely a single meal of bread and fish, witnessing people being healed, and after arriving in Bethany, seeing Lazarus walk out of his tomb!

Thomas' encounter with Jesus had been enough, that in his despair and loss after Jesus' death Thomas sought him all the more.

Let's look wider and think about the group of disciples on those two nights before Jesus came among them? They were scared, No one knew what had really happened or what was going to happen. We can imagine them sitting in the gloomy room quietly nursing their thoughts and fears, hiding behind bolted doors and hoping no-one knew they were there. When Thomas hears from the others that Jesus had risen and had visited with them, he desired an experience himself. Their experience was not enough for him personally. But interestingly Jesus does not scold Thomas for wanting his own encounter – *“Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”* Jesus is answering the doubt with an encounter to believe in.<sup>28</sup> *Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”* Scholars state that this is the highest praise given to Jesus in any of the four gospels. Thomas' personal encounter with Jesus is life changing both for himself, and for all those Thomas proceeds to lead and teach.

Let's be inspired by this story to face Jesus with our doubts and give him our deep questions. Tyler Staton defines doubt: When an event comes in to your life that does not fit within the story that you are living in. Think for a moment, what is that question for you? What is happening in your life which does not fit within your 'story'?

In our walk of faith, we straddle the tightrope between disappointments in life, and the promises of Jesus. Between the suffering which we are connected to, and the light and healing of Jesus. A tight rope between fear and the peace of the Lord. We choose to face in the direction of Lord Jesus. When Petit walked the rope, he faced in one direction and remarkably he was so comfortable in the gap that at one point he even lay down on the rope!

In our temporary lives we cannot be separated from suffering, illness, rejection, disappointments. We have our own personal disappointments. And we are each connected in some way, to human suffering – wars, hunger, poverty. Our response needs to be a desire for personal encounter with the risen Jesus. To look at Jesus and his wounds. At Easter we reflect on what Jesus did for all of us, taking upon himself all the brokenness, all the pain of the world in order to save us. He looked at all the fallenness of the world and did not flinch. When we look towards Jesus we know he understands all our suffering and disappointments. We can come with all our questions and find our answer in him. Despite all the terrible suffering in the world, Jesus believes. We believe because Jesus believes in truth, in goodness and in love. His resurrection power brings healing and salvation. Jesus may answer our deepest questions with wisdom and teaching, or he may bring comfort or healing. I remember times myself, when in prayer I have found a comfort or peace completely out of the context of the circumstances I am in.

We are living in the brokenness, in the gap, for now. There is some mystery; That suffering exists despite a God of love and goodness. But in that gap, we look towards Christ and seek his presence. *“Unless I see, says Thomas, I will not believe.”*

If ever we need an encounter with Jesus it is now. If ever we need to say *‘unless I see....’* We have a war in Ukraine that confounds and shocks us. We have a pandemic that continues to ravage much of the world. We have climate change and stark warnings of how that will impact our lives and the planet. If ever we need an encounter with the risen Lord it is now. A refugee wakes up in an unfamiliar room, unsure of when she will eat or where she will be sent. If ever she needs an encounter with Jesus. A Dad worries about how he will feed his family and heat his home. If ever we need..... Maybe we cry about the loss of our parents or their declining health. Maybe we feel lonely and wishing for company and laughter. If ever we need an encounter with the risen Lord it is now.

A quote from the Theologian Frederick Buechner *“For what we need to know, of course, is not just that God exists, not just that beyond the steely brightness of the stars there is a cosmic intelligence of some kind that keeps the whole show going, but that there is a God right here in the thick of our day-to-day lives... It is not objective proof of God's existence that we want but the experience of God's presence. That is the miracle we are really after, and that is also, I think, the miracle we really get.”*

If we want to experience God's presence we need to get honest about our doubts and our questions. Perhaps a good practice is to spend a little time each morning in honestly expressing our struggles and questions in prayer. And then we pause and wait on God.

The encounter with Jesus is what will make a difference to our lives. If Jesus rose from the dead, which he did, it changes everything. We experience Resurrection power, the power to transform. When Jesus sent out his disciples from that room, he breathed on them. He breathed the breath of life, the Holy Spirit to empower them in their ministry. As followers of Jesus, we need encounters with Jesus and an infilling of the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus to a hurting world. And so what does it mean to stop doubting and believe? Maybe it means to stand up and take a step now. Not to stop having questions and struggles. But even so, to stand and take a step of faith. We don't wait for certainty to be loving disciples. My bible commentary says: doubt is one foot lifted, poised to step forwards or backwards. There is no motion until the foot comes down. We answer Jesus' call by taking a step.

### **Worship Song: We sing out our belief - The Creed.**

**We believe in God the Father 572.** Graham Kendrick 1986. Thankyou music.

[We Believe in God the Father-Graham Kendrick Lyric Video - YouTube](#)

We Believe In God The Father,  
Maker Of The Universe,  
And In Christ His Son Our Saviour,  
Come To Us By Virgin Birth.

We Believe He Died To Save Us,  
Bore Our Sins, Was Crucified.  
Then From Death He Rose Victorious,  
Ascended To The Father's Side.

*Jesus, Lord Of All, Lord Of All,  
Jesus, Lord Of All, Lord Of All,  
Jesus, Lord Of All, Lord Of All,  
Jesus, Lord Of All, Lord Of All,  
Name Above All Names.  
Name Above All Names.*

*We Believe He Sends His Spirit,  
On His Church With Gifts Of Power.  
God His Word Of Truth Affirming,  
Sends Us To The Nations Now.*

*He Will Come Again In Glory,  
Judge The Living And The Dead.  
Every Knee Shall Bow Before Him,  
Then Must Every Tongue Confess. (Repeat Chorus)*

### **We pray for others**

Risen Lord,  
today we are blessed with the message of hope found in the story of your resurrection.  
Today the hallelujahs continue to echo in our ears and our minds,  
In joy at your love for us by your resurrection.  
It is not love that we can earn, or love that we deserve.  
It is love that you freely give to us through your grace  
We turn to you in repentance and hope.  
We bring before you those who are still calling out 'Maranatha' – come, our Lord;  
those around the world who endure and continue to endure pain and persecution.  
Those in our community who are sad and suffering.  
Lord, Your love conquers all.  
Not even death could hold you in its grasp.  
May Your love conquer once more...  
Charge us, inspire us and move us  
to bring love to this world, to bring hope to this world,  
to reveal you, the Risen Christ,  
in this world. So be it. **Amen.**

## Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,  
Hallowed be your name,  
Your kingdom come,  
Your will be done  
On earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread  
Forgive us our sins  
As we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
But deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
And the glory are yours  
Now and for ever. **Amen.**

Worship Song. Immortal invisible God only wise 234 Walter C Smith

[Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise with Lyrics by Jaron and Katherine Kamin - YouTube](#)

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,  
Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;  
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above  
Thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all life Thou givest, to both great and small;  
In all life Thou livest, the true life of all;  
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,  
And wither and perish, but nought changeth Thee.

Great Father of Glory, pure Father of Light  
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;  
All laud we would render, O help us to see:  
'Tis only the splendour of light hideth Thee.

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise

## A sending out prayer

God beyond our understanding, yet always with us, we  
offer to you:  
our minds to think of your words and your promises;  
our hearts to show your love for the world;  
our imagination to dream big for your kingdom;  
our hands to work for a better world,  
and all of our lives to love and serve you always. **Amen.**

God bless you now and always



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