

RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE

4 April 2021 - Easter Sunday

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Happy Easter! This Easter marks the anniversary of our first starting to meet and worship online via Zoom, just a couple of weeks after the first Sunday Service sheets were produced and distributed. However, Easter marks a much more important occasion, the time when once and for all time Jesus paid the price for our sins on the cross and on the third day, this day, rose from the dead, stepping into and paving the way to the new life he calls us to live in him. Easter Sunday is the day of resurrection, and all Sundays, every week, remind us of this new life, a new start to the week, a new beginning to life itself.

Easter has become a public holiday, and for most people the connection with the resurrection of Jesus has been lost. There will be feasting and this year the possibility for some people of at least meeting up with a few family members out of doors. Supermarkets have reported record sales of Easter Eggs and are expecting good grocery sales for the weekend. High spirits are anticipated, along with the hope that things will not get out of hand and put all the hard work containing Covid-19 in jeopardy. That most people now have little idea what the hot cross buns, chocolate eggs and bunnies are all about is concerning. It makes the mission that Jesus gave to his disciples, to the church, to us, even more urgent than it has ever been.

The mountain referred to in Isaiah 25:6 is of course Mount Zion and Jerusalem where the Lord Almighty reigns. [24:23] The Prophet Isaiah, always with one eye

on the immediate future and the other on the messianic hope of his people, envisions this mountain of the Lord to be the location for a great banquet, a feast befitting the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the Messiah when he comes in glory. This is the very place where the events of Holy Week have taken place, and now on Easter Sunday we see fulfilled the promise that, 'On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations.' Through the death and resurrection of Jesus we see the power of sin and death defeated forever. Unlike the feasts and festivals that were reserved for his own people as signs of their devotion to God, now the banquet is wide open, restrictions and conditions are lifted. The invitation is for 'all peoples' and 'all nations', and tears will be wiped away from 'all faces'. There is forgiveness for the disobedience of his own people too, for God will 'remove his people's disgrace from all the earth.'

Rather than bemoan, as we frequently do, the devaluing and secularisation of our sacred festivals and celebrations, we must recognise who they are for. It was because God loved the world that he sent his Son, so that it might be saved from death and not destroyed. [John 3:16-17] In a digital movie or piece of software an Easter Egg is an unexpected bonus or hidden extra, waiting to be discovered. There is an Easter Egg, a bonus reward, for all who will look for it and put their faith in Jesus. Once hidden in a dark tomb it is now revealed in all its glory. Those who die to themselves will be raised up with Christ.

Our Sunday worship service is just one small part of the spiritual life of Ryde Baptist Church. We are still not all able to safely gather in our building, so Zoom is the securest way for most people to meet at this time. It is not the same, but it fulfils an important purpose for the duration. Our Zoom Sunday Service is at 10.30am today. Services take a variety of forms and contents, and on the second Sunday of the month usually includes communion. On the fourth Sunday at 7pm we join with other Ryde churches. Our main weekly prayer meeting takes place on Monday evenings from 7pm, which is a really powerful and meaningful time in our life together. If you want to spend time praying with brothers and sisters in fellowship, this is the place to come. Regular Home Groups and other Courses - such as 'The Prayer Course' that we have been running during Lent - are very important for growing in discipleship and fellowship together. Of course, at the moment all these things take place using Zoom. The Zoom links will be sent to those who have signed up to receive them. If you'd like us to send you the links, please let us know. If you are reading this sheet on your computer or device you can click on the the readings and songs. There is more information on our website at <https://rydebaptist.xyz>

BIBLE READINGS

[Isaiah 25:6-9](#)

[John 20:1-18](#)

[\[Mark 16:9-20\]](#)

[Acts 10:34-43](#)

CALL TO WORSHIP

On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine— the best of

meats and the finest of wines. On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death for ever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people's disgrace from the earth. The Lord has spoken. In that day they will say, 'Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.' [Isaiah 25:6-9]

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

SONGS

[Christ The Lord Is Risen Today](#)

[Resurrection Hymn](#)

PRAYER & REFLECTION

O God, by whose power Christ was raised from the dead, so that the worst that men could do had no dominion over him, lay your hand in loving tenderness on all who need this message most. Because the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost, we pray—

For those who have lost their dear ones and whose hearts are sad;

For those who have lost their health and vitality;

For those who have lost their youth;

For those who have lost their livelihood;

For those who have lost opportunities;

For those who have lost patience;

For those who have lost their faith;

For all, we pray, who are wounded in the battle of life and are near to despair.

Give to us all such a vision of Christ's risen glory that we, too, may trust his power; that we, too, may know that nothing can separate us from your loving purposes or finally defeat your will.

So may we rise up from all our distress and despair and take heart again; walk with Christ, the companion of our souls, to whatever lies in store for us, to find at last that faith has its own reward, that we have not missed our way, that the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which seemed lost forever.

We ask it through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[Leslie D Weatherhead, altered]

SONGS

Before The Throne Of God Above

We Bow Down

MINI-SERMON OUTLINE

It was forty years ago this year, 1981, that the 31 year old Graham Kendrick released his album *The King Is Among Us*. It contained several songs that are still used today. It was his tenth album, in a career which had started in the 1960s and produced a debut album, *Footsteps On The Sea*, in 1971. For many of us, Graham Kendrick's music and lyrics were the worship soundtrack of our youth. They also accompanied an era of Christian optimism and mission activity, including the fondly remembered *March For Jesus* - and in those days we went on many such marches. The title song *The King Is Among Us* reminds us that after the resurrection and ascension, Jesus is now present among us, 'His Spirit is here' and invites us, 'Let's draw near and worship... Let songs fill the air.' At the time the church seemed unembarrassed to sing those songs out loud, in worship, on the streets. Another song taught us how to share our faith in simple uncomplicated terms:

One shall tell another
And he shall tell his friend

Husbands, wives and children
Shall come following on
From house to house in families
Shall more be gathered in
And lights will shine in every street
So warm and welcoming

It is a simple strategy and involves all of the church: every person who knows Jesus introduces him to somebody else, each one who has met the risen Lord tells the story and makes the connection with other members of their family, friendship group and neighbours. We are all, without any exception, witnesses to the resurrection in our own time – this is the only evidence there is that we have met Jesus.

The First Easter Morning. It all began with Mary Magdalene, who was first on the scene and found the empty tomb first thing on the first day. Lots of firsts there. Mary informs Peter and John who come to the tomb and are bemused so return back to where they are lodging. Only Mary stays at the tomb, where after a conversation with someone she mistook for a gardener she realises that she is in the presence of the risen Jesus. At this she herself returns to the other disciples with the clear testimony, 'I have seen the Lord!' We get different details of the encounters in each of the four Gospels, reflecting the different ways the witnesses and disciples experienced things. This will always be the case when we share our story too, yet the important thing will be in common, that we too have met the risen Lord. The earliest account is in Mark's Gospel, and here Mary Magdalene is not alone for she is accompanied by Mary the mother of James and Salome. There would probably have been other women there too, as there were many in the wider group that travelled around with Jesus. Their purpose

was to finish off the preparation of Jesus' body which had to be hastily buried just before the Sabbath. It was the women who had faith; they did as they were told and shared the news with the others, but 'they did not believe it.' Mark 16:9-20 insists that whoever reported back, whether the women or the two disciples who 'were walking in the country', they were not believed. Nevertheless they persisted, until Jesus himself came and stood in the room.

2021 Easter Morning. That is the simple pattern we are called to follow. To go on bearing witness, sharing our testimony, that we have seen and been in the presence of the Risen Lord, regardless of the disbelief or other opposition that we may face. Who is it that Jesus rebukes for their disbelief? Mark tells us about the first followers of Jesus having heard Mary's testimony: 'When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it.' Yes, even the closest disciples, the Apostles, did not believe the women so, 'Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.' Who is going to be rebuked today for unbelief? This is a great day of celebration for Jesus is Alive. Yet it is easy to bury a spirit of unbelief under all the festivities. If we truly believe, if we have encountered the Risen Jesus in our own personal experience – which is what being a Christian is – then that is only the beginning and not the end. The only evidence we have that the encounter, the faith, is real is if we pass it on. The message of Easter is only ever a baton to be passed on and never to be hidden away in a cold dark tomb. Were we running on the same track but somehow missed the baton, or did we grasp the baton but

missed the exchange and it was never passed on? Whatever, the relay is lost. The controversial ending to Mark's Gospel includes this challenging version of the Great Commission, as Jesus says to us: 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.' Happy Easter, for the full fruit of faith is Eternal Life.

SONG

Thine Be The Glory

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, risen from the dead and alive for evermore: stand in our midst today as in the upper room; show us thy hands and thy side; speak thy peace to our hearts and minds; and send us forth into the world as thy witnesses; for the glory of thy name. [*John R W Stott, altered*]

BLESSING

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen— by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. [Acts 10:39-42]

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, now and always. Amen.