

Maundy Thursday

Good evening and welcome- the psalmist writes, ***I love the LORD, for He heard my voice; He heard my cry for mercy.***

Thank you for being with us tonight, on this Maundy Thursday. This is an incredibly special, incredibly important evening in the life of God's Church. All over the world, our sisters and brothers are meeting just like this; they're reading from the same Scriptures, praying the same prayers, gathering around the same table.

And so, I'd invite you to follow along if you can, the words of the liturgy. We'll say the words in bold together, not just with those of gathered here, but with Christians all over the world in many different branches of the faith family tree, as we worship with saints around the world, and saints and angels around the throne of God.

One: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you

All: And also with your spirit.

One: Our Lord Jesus Christ says:
'If you love me, keep my commandments.'
'Unless I wash you, you have no part in me.'

Dearly beloved, the Scriptures teach us to acknowledge our many sins and offences, not concealing them from our Heavenly Father, but

confessing them with humble and obedient hearts that we may obtain forgiveness by his infinite goodness and mercy.

We ought at all times humbly to acknowledge our sins before Almighty God, but especially when we come together in His presence to give thanks for the great benefits we have received at His hands, to declare His most worthy praise, to hear His holy Word, and to ask, for ourselves and on behalf of others, those things which are necessary for our life and our salvation.

Therefore, draw near with me to the throne of heavenly grace. As we confess to Almighty God our sins against His love, and ask Him to cleanse us.

One: Have mercy on us, O God,
in your great goodness;
according to the abundance of your compassion
blot out our offences.
Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

One: Against you only have we sinned
and done what is evil in your sight.
Christ, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

One: Purge us from our sin and we shall be clean;
wash us and we shall be whiter than snow.
Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Silence is kept

One: May the Father forgive us
by the death of his Son
and strengthen us
to live in the power of the Spirit
all our days.

All: Amen.

All: Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to His people on earth.

One: Lord God, heavenly King,
Almighty God and Father,
We worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
You take away the sin of the world:
Have mercy on us;
You are seated at the right hand of the Father:
Receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One,
You alone are the Lord,
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
With the Holy Spirit,
In the glory of God the Father.

All: Amen.

Psalm 116:1-19

The New Commandment

The reason this day is called Maundy Thursday is that on the night He was betrayed- this night- Jesus gathered with His friends, just as He gathers with us.

Knowing that the time was soon coming when He would be betrayed by one He loved; when He would be taken by those He knit together in their mothers' wombs; when He would be nailed to the cross carved from a tree He grew from seed and sapling-

Knowing all this and more, on that evening, on this evening, Christ said, ***A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*** [John 13:34-35]

In Latin, the word command is ***mandatum***, from which we get Maundy. Because it was on that night that John tells us, ***Jesus knew that the hour had come for Him to leave the world and go to the Father. Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.*** [John 13:1]

I love how the ***Jesus Storybook Bible*** puts it- **P286-288.**

And so, we see before us a table with some water and a towel.

Don't worry- I won't be asking anyone to take off their shoes. But as some music plays, I'd encourage you to take time to pray. And when you feel ready, if you feel able, I'd love to wash your hands.

One of the ways I love to describe myself and my role is that I am a servant of the servants of Christ. And so you'll come, and because we still want to be sensitive that this is in many ways a COVID world, I'd invite you to sanitise your hands, and then hold them over the bowl.

And I'll pour water on them; and then you'll turn them over, and I'll pour water on the other side. And then I'll take the towel and dry your hands.

And then, if you're willing, I'll take some oil and anoint you in the Name of the Lord. And you can receive this anointing in whatever way you need it.

For some of us, it may be for healing in mind or body or heart or soul.

For some of us it may be on the behalf of those we love, who need a special and miraculous touch of God in their lives.

For others, the anointing may call to mind the fact that this is what kings received in the Old Testament- and it may serve to remind us that we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ Jesus, the Firstborn over all Creation.

And for others still, it may call to mind that other class of person who received anointing- the priests. And so we may receive the commission all over again to be a part of God's work in the world He loves, serving as ambassadors of the New Creation that He paid such a price to birth in the midst of the Old.

And so, we'll turn again to the liturgy, and then the music will play, and when you feel ready, and if you feel able, I'd invite you to come and, as the old hymn says, sister, brother, you'll let me serve you, you'll let me be as Christ to you.

All: God is love, and where true love is, God himself is there.

One: Here in Christ we gather, love of Christ our calling;
Christ, our love, is with us, gladness be his greeting;
let us all revere and love him, God eternal.
Loving him, let each love Christ in all his brothers.

All: God is love, and where true love is, God himself is there.

One: When we Christians gather, members of one Body,
let there be in us no discord, but one spirit;
banished now be anger, strife and every quarrel.
Christ our God be present always here among us.

All: God is love, and where true love is, God himself is there.

One: Grant us love's fulfilment, joy with all the blessed
when we see your face, O Saviour, in its glory;
shine on us, O purest Light of all creation,
be our bliss while endless ages sing your praises.

All: God is love, and where true love is, God himself is there.

Washing and anointing

One: Lord Jesus Christ,
you have taught us
that what we do for the least of our brothers and sisters
we do also for you:
give us the will to be the servant of others
as you were the servant of all,
and gave up your life and died for us,
but are alive and reign, now and for ever.

All: Amen.

Prayers of intercession

One: In the power of the Spirit let us pray to the Father
through Christ the Saviour of the world.

Father,
on this, the night He was betrayed,
your Son Jesus Christ washed His disciples' feet.
We commit ourselves to follow His example of love and service.
Lord, hear us

All: and humble us.

One: On this night, He prayed for His disciples to be one.
We pray for the unity of your Church.
Lord, hear us

All: and unite us.

One: On this night, He prayed for those who were to believe through
His disciples' message.
We pray for the mission of your Church.
Lord, hear us

All: and renew our zeal.

One: On this night, He commanded His disciples to love,
but suffered rejection Himself.
We pray for the rejected and unloved.
Lord, hear us

All: and fill us with your love.

One: On this night, He reminded His disciples
that if the world hated them it hated His first.
We pray for those who are persecuted for their faith.
Lord, hear us

All: and give us your peace.

One: On this night, He accepted the cup of death
and looked forward to the new wine of the Kingdom.
We remember those who have died in the peace of Christ.
Lord, hear us

All: and welcome all your children into paradise.

The Eucharist

One: Jesus says: 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.
Do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.'
The peace of the Lord be always with you

All: and also with your spirit.

This means of grace that we celebrate together- the Lord's Supper,
Holy Communion, the Eucharist- our Lord instituted it in the context of
a Passover meal. A high and holy time in the life of our Jewish friends,
and so it's right and fitting that as we prepare for this feast, our words
of institution echo in many ways the words they'll say around the
Passover table tomorrow night.

One: At the Eucharist we are with our crucified and risen Lord.
We know that it was not only our ancestors,
but we who were redeemed
and brought forth from bondage to freedom,
from mourning to feasting.
We know that as He was with them in the Upper Room
so our Lord is here with us now.

All: Until the kingdom of God comes
let us celebrate this feast.

One: Blessed are you, Lord, God of the universe,
you bring forth bread from the earth.

All: Blessed be God for ever.

One: Blessed are you, Lord, God of the universe,
you create the fruit of the vine.

All: Blessed be God for ever.

One: And now we give you thanks
because, having loved His own who were in the world,
Our Lord Jesus Christ loved them to the end;
and on the night before He suffered,
sitting at table with His disciples,
He instituted these holy mysteries,
that we, redeemed by His death
and restored to life by His resurrection,
might be partakers of His divine nature.

All: Our Father in Heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your Kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one,
For yours is the Kingdom
And the power
And the glory forever. Amen.

One: God our Father,
Your Son Jesus Christ was obedient to the end
And drank the cup prepared for Him:
May we who share His table
Be nourished by His presence,
And united in His love;
That tonight and always, we may be faithful.

All: Amen.

It was on this night, the night He was betrayed, that the Lord Jesus took
bread, and when He had given thanks He broke it and said, *Take and
eat; this is my body, given for you; do this in remembrance of me.*

In the same way, after supper Christ took the cup, saying, *This cup is the
new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you for the
forgiveness of sins; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.*

All: Jesus, Lamb of God,
have mercy on us.

Jesus, bearer of our sins,
have mercy on us.

Jesus, redeemer of the world,
grant us peace.

One: Jesus is the Lamb of God
who takes away the sin of the world.
Blessed are those who are called to his supper.

Draw near with faith.
Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which He gave for you,
and His blood which He shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that He died for you,
and feed on Him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

_____ and _____ are going to serve us this evening, and so when you're ready, you can come forward and come to _____. He'll look you in the eye and remind you that this is the body of Christ, and it's broken for you.

Then you can take and eat, and move to _____. And she'll look you in the eye and remind you that it's the blood of Christ shed for you, and you can drink and give thanks.

The Eucharist

One: Lord Jesus Christ,
you humbled yourself in taking the form of a servant,
and in obedience died on the cross for our salvation:
give us the mind to follow you
and to proclaim you as Lord and King,
to the glory of God the Father.

All: Amen.

All: Faithful God,
may we who share this banquet
glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,
our salvation, life and hope,
who reigns as Lord now and for ever.

Amen.

Stripping of the Sanctuary

You may have noticed that throughout the different seasons of the Church, the colour on our welcoming table in the vestibule changes. Throughout Lent it's been purple- the colour of lament and penitence.

Today it's changed to white- it might remind us of the purity of the Lamb of God who bled and died for our sake and our salvation; it might remind us of the towel He wrapped around His waist as He washed the feet of His friends.

But, we'll soon enter the hardest and heaviest day of the Christian year- Good Friday. And so the time has come to strip the Sanctuary. And so we'll read the 22nd Psalm, the words our Lord prayed from the cross, as these symbols of light and life and beauty are removed.

Psalm 22

And I hope you recognised that, even in the midst of those hard words of loneliness and despair, there was still hope that even here, even now, even through all of this, God can be trusted, God can be relied upon, because He will never, ever forget His people- He is the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep by name.

Our time together this evening is drawing to a close. Thank you for being here tonight. If you're able, I hope you'll be back tomorrow evening at 6pm for our Tenebrae service, our shadow service.

You know by now that I finish our worship together with a blessing, and then a dismissal- but that pattern changes this evening and tomorrow- there's no conclusion to the service, because the service isn't over.

Maundy Thursday and Good Friday are just the first and second acts in a three act play- it's not over until Sunday. It's not over until Resurrection.

And so we're going to sing together, and I'll pray, and then we'll go.

*Oh, when I think that God, His Son not sparing,
sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in,
that on the cross my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin*

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour-God, to thee:
How great thou art! How great thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Saviour-God, to thee:
How great thou art! How great thou art!*

*Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.*

When the disciples had sung a hymn they went out to the Mount of Olives. Jesus prayed to the Father, 'If it is possible, take this cup of suffering from me.' He said to his disciples, 'How is it that you were not able to keep watch with me for one hour? The hour has come for the Son of Man to be handed over to the power of sinners.'

Christ was obedient unto death. Go in His peace.

Good Friday Timeline

6am- Jesus stands trial before the religious leaders.



Lord, in your mercy, you would rather die for your people than for all to perish.
Glory be to God.

7am- Jesus faces Pilate.



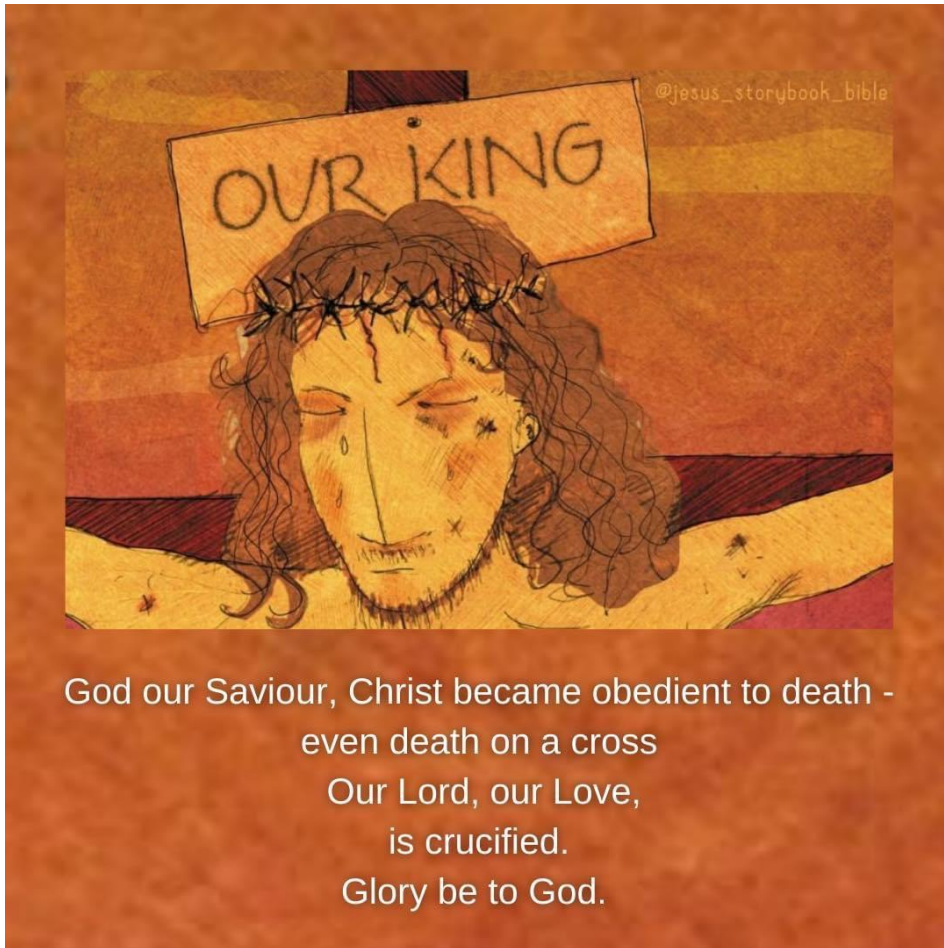
Jesus Christ our Saviour, you who are the way, and
the truth, and the life, endured the mockery of those
who refused to recognise the Truth in the flesh.
Glory be to God.

8am- Simon of Cyrene carries the Lord's cross.

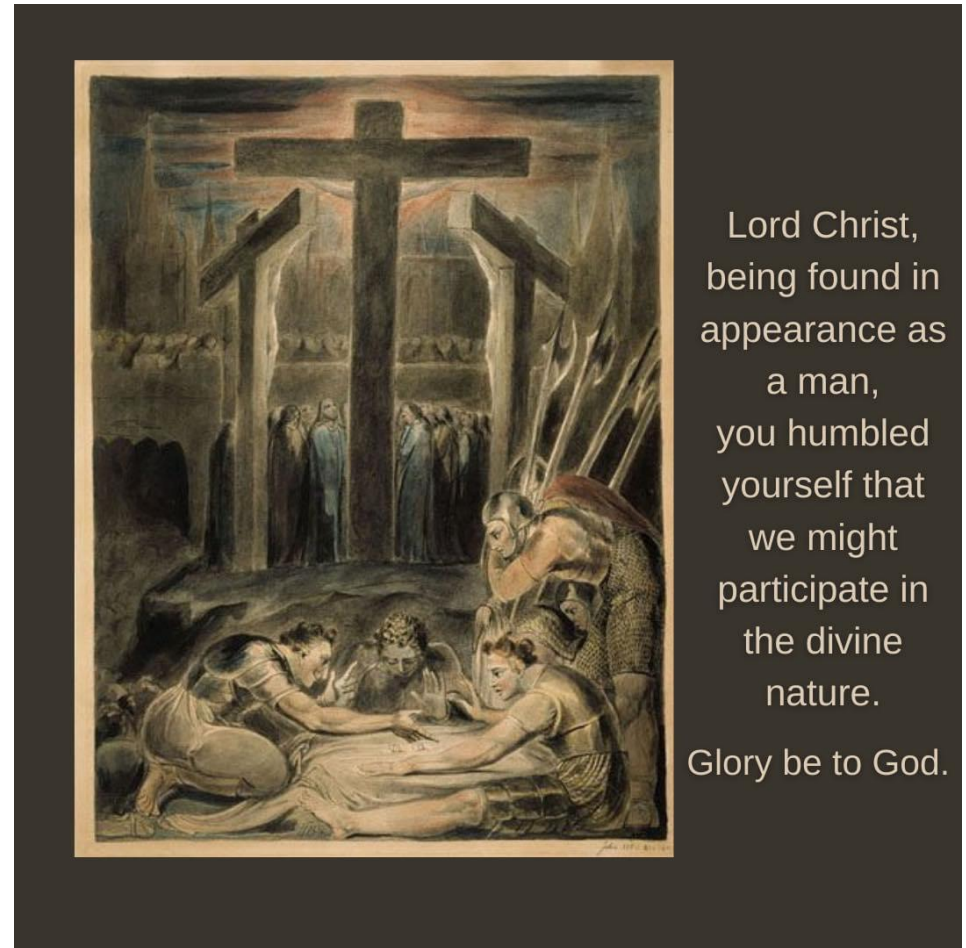


Lord, for the joy set before you,
you endured the cross.
Glory be to God.

9am- There they crucified Him.



9:30am- The soldiers divide His clothes.



10am- He saved others, but He can't save Himself.



God our Father, your Son
prayed that this cup would be taken from Him -
but for our sake and salvation chose
not His own will, but yours.
Glory be to God.

11am- Today you will be with me in Paradise.



God of endless
grace and
boundless mercy,
Jesus Christ
came to seek
and save the lost.

Glory be to God.

12pm- Darkness descends.



Lord, you had no sin,
yet became sin for us,
that in you we might become
the righteousness of God.
Glory be to God.

2:45pm- Jesus thirsts.



Thank you,
merciful God,
that you made
yourself nothing
by taking on the
nature of a servant,
being made in
human likeness.
Glory be to God.

3pm- It is finished.



Tenebrae

Solo- *Why?* by Nichole Nordeman

*We rode into town the other day,
Just me and my daddy.*

*He said I'd finally reached that age,
And I could ride next to him on a horse
That of course, was not quite as wild.*

*We heard a crowd of people shouting,
And so we stopped to find out why.
There was that man that my dad said he loved,
But today there was fear in his eyes.*

*So I said, 'Daddy, why are they screaming?
Why are the faces of some of them beaming?
Why is He dressed in that bright purple robe?
I bet that crown hurts Him more than He shows.
Daddy please, can't you do something?
He looks as though He's gonna cry.
You said He was stronger than all of those guys;
Daddy, please tell me why.
Why does everyone want Him to die?'*

*Later that day, the sky grew cloudy,
And Daddy said I should go inside.
Somehow he knew things would get stormy.
Boy was he right, but I could not keep from wondering
If there was something he had to hide.*

*So after he left, I had to find out.
I was not afraid of getting lost.
So I followed the crowds to a hill*

**Where I knew men had been killed,
And I heard a voice come from the cross.**

**And it said, 'Father, why are they screaming?
Why are the faces of some of them beaming?
Why are they casting their lots for my robe?
This crown of thorns hurts me more than it shows.
Father please, can't you do something?
I know that You must hear my cry.
I thought I could handle a cross of this size.
Father, remind me why.
Why does everyone want me to die?
Oh, when will I understand why?'**

**My precious son, I hear them screaming.
I'm watching the face of the enemy beaming.
But soon I will clothe you in robes of my own.
Jesus, this hurts me much more than you know,
But this dark hour, I must do nothing,
Though I've heard your unbearable cry.
The power in your blood destroys all of the lies;
Soon you'll see past their unmerciful eyes.
Look, there below, see the child
Trembling by her father's side.
Now I can tell you why...
She is why you must die.**

The Apostle John writes,

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. [1 John 1:5]

Jesus says,

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." [John 8:12]

But the Scriptures tell us,

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. [John 3:19]

This evening we are joining with God's people all around the world in worshipping in a service of Tenebrae, from the Latin meaning 'shadows.'

On Good Friday we remember that Jesus Christ took upon Himself the full weight of the world's brokenness, and in the depths of His love carried it all the way to death.

He suffered all that could be suffered, He endured all that could be endured, and He willingly accepted the ultimate symptom of the poison of sin at the heart of Creation- death.

This service reminds us that this is the day that God died.

It's designed to put us in the shoes of the women who followed Jesus up to the hill of Calvary, mourning and wailing as they went.

And ultimately, it's designed to leave us standing with those same women as the stone is rolled across the entrance to the tomb where our Lord is laid.

And so, this service is very different from when we usually gather together. It's intended to be hard; it's intended to be uncomfortable.

We won't be worshipping next door over tea and coffee- we won't even receive a blessing as we go.

But as hard as it is, it will nevertheless be a time of worship- because every reminder of the death of Christ should drive home for us, deeper and deeper, that this is how much He loved us- as John tells us, having loved His own who were in the world, Jesus loved them to the end.

And the harder we lean into the darkness of Good Friday, the better we will be prepared for the Sunday that's just around the corner.

And so, Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, we thank you that God so loved that He gave. We thank you that you literally loved us more than life, and so you gave yourself into the hands of broken people, to be broken; dying people, to be put to death; sinful people, to become sin for us.

As we worship you now, may we be staggered anew at the depths of your love for us, love that willingly went all the way to death, love that surely demands a response of love from us.

***This we ask in the name of Christ our Saviour,
Amen.***

1. The Word of Forgiveness- read by Church member

Luke 23:32-34

Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with [Jesus] to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

God is love, says John, and the ultimate expression of His love is Jesus Christ, living and dying and rising again for us. The cross proves to us,

once and for all, the unstoppable, relentless, always-overcoming love of God.

This love is so great that it even reaches those holding the hammer, those driving in the nails, those raising the cross.

The Psalmist tells us that God knit those Roman soldiers together in their mother's wombs; He knew every hair on their heads; all the days ordained for them were written in His book before even one of them came to be. That means that, even as He intricately designed and built them in the womb, He knew that they would one day nail His Son to the cross.

And yet He loved them nevertheless. And His love is so great, so rich, so full, so free, that our Lord could even plead for them with His Father, begging for their forgiveness.

And this prayer was not limited to those soldiers driving in the nails. It reached the criminals who hung beside His cross- *Father forgive them*; it reached the leaders who orchestrated His death- *Father, forgive them*; it reached the passers by who sneered and laughed- *Father, forgive them*.

And it reaches us, today. *Father, forgive them*.

Because the guilt, the brokenness, the sin that led to the death of Christ, it wasn't limited to those soldiers or priests or spectators. It's our guilt; our brokenness; our sin.

And it wasn't just those who participated in that first Good Friday who need the forgiveness for which Christ prayed- every Son of Adam and Daughter of Eve held that hammer and drove in those nails.

All that we have been, and failed to be; all that we have done, and failed to do. All the ways in which we have been out of step with God and out

of line with His will for us. The immeasurable distance between who God is and who we are, between what God is like and what we are like.

It led to the cross.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians, *God made Him who had no sin to be sin **for us**.* And so we stood as guilty as those soldiers, as guilty as those leaders, as guilty as those mockers. Our waywardness put Christ on the cross; our waywardness killed the Son of God.

And yet it was for us that Jesus prayed, *Father, forgive them.* This morning, each of us can put our name in that prayer- it reaches us, it covers us, it's enough for us. Because the love of God is so infinitely rich that it can forgive those who crucify it.

We will never know this side of Heaven how many of those gathered around the cross accepted the forgiveness offered by Christ. We will never know until we cross the finish line how many received what He freely gave, what they so desperately needed.

But may each of us and all of us this evening accept and embrace the forgiveness still extended to us today. May we know that, in the love of God, this prayer offered two millennia ago is still sufficient for us today- it still covers all we've been, and we've failed to be; all that we've done, and failed to do.

Even as He died, Christ prayed for our forgiveness. In fact, Christ died **to secure** our forgiveness.

As Paul writes, *Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift.*

Lord, we thank you for the forgiveness that was literally offered at the cross, a forgiveness that has never run out and never run dry. May we remember how costly was that forgiveness, and therefore just how immeasurably deep was the love that drove it.

May we thankfully embrace what God has lavishly given.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen.

Child extinguishes candle cluster

2. The Word of Salvation- read by Church member

Luke 23:39-43

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Not long before He went to the cross, Jesus encountered Zacchaeus in Jericho. When the life of this tax collector was transformed by the power of the Gospel, Jesus gave one of those wonderful statements that encapsulate His entire mission- He said, The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.

There are few people in the Scriptures who better fit this description than this criminal who was crucified next to Jesus. He was suffering the most shameful death the Romans could imagine. He was a rebel, suffering execution for crimes against the state. The Law of Moses said that this death on a cross marked him as being under a curse.

The other Gospels record that he initially joined his neighbour in mocking the so-called Messiah who hung between them. He was truly and utterly lost.

But it was for this dying rebel that Jesus came. It was for this mocker that He lived, it was for this blasphemer that He died.

This man found himself covered by the prayer of forgiveness Jesus had offered up to His Father, and so when the rebel caught a glimpse of just who it was that hung beside him, he cried out for life; he cried out for rescue.

Not from anything as small and momentary as the cross that was slowly killing him, but rather from the power of sin that had held him down and held him back his entire life; the weight of guilt that had crushed him for so long; the baggage of brokenness that had eventually brought him to this Roman cross.

And so while the other rebel cried out for Jesus to save him from his execution, his comrade instead looked beyond. He looked to the life that awaited him on the other side of his last breath, and threw himself upon the mercy and grace and kindness that had taken up flesh and hung beside him on the cross.

And without hesitation or recrimination, without dragging up the past or digging through the dirt of all that the rebel had been and done, Jesus responds with the incredible assurance- Today you will be with me in paradise.

We don't know how long that rebel hung there. We don't know how long he suffered on the cross, but we do know that when he closed his eyes for the last time on Calvary, he opened them in Heaven, welcomed by His Saviour into the home prepared for him since before the creation of the world.

Because those who passed by the foot of the cross were correct. He saved others, they said, but He can't save Himself.

Because if He had saved Himself, He could not have saved others. Like the dying rebel, we are saved only because Christ did not save Himself. We have the assurance of life, because Christ willingly died.

The rebel spoke for us when he rebuked his neighbour- We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.

Of all those who have walked this earth, Jesus alone was innocent, Jesus alone deserved life. And yet He willingly took everything that was sharp and broken in the world, so that we who deserve death could live life in all of its fullness.

What a great salvation, and what a wonderful Saviour.

Lord, like the dying rebel, we find ourselves in need of mercy. We were lost- thank you for finding us. We were blind- thank you for giving us sight. We were dead- thank you for bringing us into rich, abundant life.

May we all know the assurance, deep in our bones, that there is waiting for us a seat at the wedding feast of the Lamb; that in our Father's house there is a place for us.

Lord, like the two rebels on Calvary, each of us has a choice. May we choose well.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen.

Child extinguishes candle cluster

- **Congregation- When I survey**

**When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.**

**Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.**

**See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?**

**Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.**

And so, when He formed the human family in His own image, He formed us for relationship. He formed us for community.

He knew that His death would break the heart of his mother. From the very beginning, she had been warned this day was coming.

The magi who came to worship the infant Christ brought with them gold for the King, frankincense for a priest, and myrrh, for burial.

When Mary and Joseph brought their newborn son to the temple in Jerusalem, the prophet Simeon blessed the Holy Family, and warned Mary, A sword will pierce your own soul.

Luke tells us that she treasured all these things in her heart. But what could possibly prepare a mother for the execution of her son? What could possibly equip her for the awful heartache of watching her firstborn Child die on a cross?

Mary didn't know what was to come in the days ahead- all she knew was that here and now she was watching her Child die. She was losing the relationship she had enjoyed with Him for more than three decades. And her heart was torn into pieces.

And Christ, even as He hung in agony, even as He endured the weight of sin's curse, saw her pain, He saw her hurt, and He moved on her behalf.

Even as she lost one Son, He ensured that she gained another. Even as one relationship was torn from her, He crafted a new one. Even as one love seemed to be dying, He gave life to a new one.

Because, as God said from the very beginning, it is not good for us to be alone. In fact, that's why Christ came; it's why He lived; it's why He died. So that we need never be alone.

3. The Word of Relationship- read by Church member

John 19:25-27-

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

God is perfect relationship. As Father, Son and Holy Spirit, He has existed eternally in a flawless dance of love and devotion and intimacy.

He came to draw us into that beautiful Trinitarian dance; He came so that we might take our seat at the Table; He came so that we could be drawn, like Mary, into a new relationship- the relationship for which we were shaped and moulded, the relationship that we most desperately and urgently need.

Even as He hung on the cross, Jesus saw Mary. He saw her pain and her heartache; He saw the wounds on her soul; He saw the awful weight of sorrow. And He spoke, and He worked, and He intervened.

He sees us this evening. He sees where we are and what we face and what we carry. He sees the wounds that we bear and the burdens under which we labour. And He speaks, He works, He intervenes.

He invites us deeper and deeper into the dance; He invites us to know more and more of the relationship we most foundationally need; He invites us to taste and see that the Lord is good, and good all the time.

The songwriter says, When He was on the cross, I was on His mind.

You were on His mind.

We were on His mind.

As the Son of God hung, beaten and battered and broken on the cross, He saw the brokenhearted and spoke healing, just as He speaks it today- for you and me and us together.

Lord, thank you for this staggering love, this amazing grace, this boundless compassion. You set the stars in the sky and you hold them in place; you count the grains of sand on every shore on every planet. And yet you still see us, you still know us.

You still see our hurts and know our pain; you still see where we are and you still know what we face.

And you care. Thank you, Lord, for speaking healing, for speaking comfort, for speaking restoration. We know that the words of God were enough to bring Creation into being- they are still enough today to bring us through the darkest of valleys into a place of light.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen.

Child extinguishes candle cluster

4. The Word of Abandonment- read by Church member

Matthew 27:45-46-

From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").

All through His earthly life, Jesus had rested in perfect intimacy with His Father. When His parents lost Him in Jerusalem, He found that the most natural place in the world for Him to be was in the temple- in His Father's house.

When He rose out of the waters of baptism the voice of the Father affirmed, *You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.*

Time and time again He would withdraw to a lonely place to pray, enjoying again the fellowship He had known since before the first dawn.

Even as He suffered in Gethsemane, He could still pray, *Abba-* a word of unparalleled intimacy which could be translated as *Dearest Father.*

But as He hung on the cross, everything changed. The unity that existed before Creation came into being, the unity that will exist for all eternity after Heaven and Earth have passed away and all things are made new, this unity was broken. It was torn asunder.

As the Son bore the full weight of brokenness, as He took upon Himself everything that was ruined and spoiled and fallen, as He became sin, that perfect dance of Father, Son, and Spirit was abruptly halted as the Father turned His face from His beloved Son.

This is the only time in Scripture where Jesus calls His Father, *My God*. Their perfect intimacy was broken. Their perfect fellowship was interrupted by the curse of sin, as Jesus was forsaken.

This is so unnatural, so wrong, so far from the way things were meant to be, the way they had always been, that Creation itself couldn't bear it- the skies turned as black as night in protest and in grief.

Jesus quotes the words of David from Psalm 22-

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?
My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, but I find no rest.*

In praying this prayer, Christ identified Himself with His royal ancestor, even as He identifies Himself with all of us- all who have prayed prayers like this. All who have agonised over where God is in our suffering, and why isn't He here, why isn't He doing something, why isn't He helping?

Our perfect High Priest is able to empathise with us- He can feel our pain in His heart. Because He too had to cry out in lament- and we are given no hint in Scripture that His Father answered.

Jesus suffered and died, and He did so alone, and He did so for us. So that we need never be God-forsaken. That we need never be cut off or left out or left behind. So that we can know, even in our place of lament, our place of tears, our place of deepest darkness, that even there God hears, God cares, God has promised,

*Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you,
So we say with confidence,
“The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.”*

Jesus cried out, *My God*, so that we can cry out, *Abba*. So that we can call God *Dearest Father*- that we can live in intimacy with God here and now, and enjoy fellowship with Him forever in eternity.

Christ was forsaken so that we could be welcomed. He left the dance so that we could be embraced into it. How great is the love He has lavished on us.

Lord, we cannot imagine the agony of being forsaken by God after enjoying unbroken divine fellowship for all eternity. But thanks to the indescribable gift of God's love, we need never experience it for ourselves. Because of all that God has done in Christ, we can be welcomed, embraced, drawn into the very life of God Himself.

Thank you for this love; thank you for this grace. May each of us and all of us press further up and deeper in to the intimacy you desire for us and with us.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen.

Child extinguishes candle cluster

Congregation- How deep the Father's Love- verses 1 & 2

**How deep the Father's love for us
How vast beyond all measure
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure
How great the pain of searing loss
The Father turns His face away
As wounds which mar the Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory**

**Behold the man upon a cross
My sin upon His shoulders
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice
Call out among the scoffers
It was His love that held Him there
Until it was accomplished
His dying breath has brought me life
I know that it is finished**

5. The Word of Distress- read by Church member

John 19:28-29

Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.

This side of Heaven, we can never fully understand the mystery of the Incarnation. We can't fully grasp what was happening when God became flesh and made His dwelling amongst us; when God descended from the fullness of His glory and moved into our neighbourhood.

Throughout the history of the Church, God's people have been tempted to assume that one aspect of Christ's nature- human or divine- was dominant. He was **mostly God** or **mostly man**; He was **superhuman** or **poorly disguised deity**.

But time and time again throughout Scripture, we are reminded that this is just not the case- in some impossible, undefinable way, Jesus Christ was fully, perfectly human, as well as fully, perfectly God.

In a way we can never fully figure out, Paul can tell us that in Christ, all the fullness of God dwelt in bodily form. He could command the wind and waves, and they recognised the voice that spoke Creation into being, and they rushed to obey.

He held authority over life and death; He caused the blind to see and the deaf to hear and the lame to leap and run and dance for joy. Even the demons of Hell recognised His divinity, and did so with terror.

Jesus Christ was fully, perfectly God.

And yet, He was human enough to weep and mourn; human enough to be so tired as to sleep through a storm; human enough to be distressed at the thought that His friends would abandon Him and His mission.

He was utterly, absolutely human. And His painfully, pitifully human cry of thirst as He hung on the cross reminds us that His Godhood did not diminish His suffering. His divine nature as God Made Flesh did not render Him immune to the agony of crucifixion.

His status as the Son of God was not a shield that protected Him from the pain of hanging upon the cross hour after hour. In fact, it surely made the pain so much worse- He is the Author of Life, and He is dying.

He is Love, and His precious children are torturing Him to death. He is Light, but in this hour darkness reigns.

His cry of distress drives home for us once again the depths of His love. The One who came to satisfy the thirst of the world cried out in the agony of thirst. The One who said, *Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst... the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life*, this same Jesus now desperately cried out for water.

In Jesus Christ, we have a Great High Priest who fully entered into our world, with all of its fallenness, with all of its sharp edges and broken pieces. He felt the pain we endure; He suffered from the wounds we carry; He knew the weight of the same burdens we bear.

His love is so staggering that He willingly accepted all of this brokenness, which culminated on a rugged cross on the hill of Calvary, where the God of all Creation cried out in pain, *I am thirsty*.

His suffering is the ultimate expression of how relentlessly the Good Shepherd will seek those who have wandered so far off. We need never doubt His love for us, because the love of God given flesh and bone hung upon a cross and pleaded for a drink.

Lord, thank you for this scandalous and extravagant love, a love none of us could ever earn or deserve; a love of which none of us could ever be worthy. And yet a love that is freely and graciously lavished upon each and every one of us.

Thank you, Lord, that this evening each of us here can testify, Jesus suffered for me; He died for me; He bore it all for me. When there was nothing loveable about us, you loved us nevertheless; when we gave you every reason to reject us, you chose us nevertheless.

Thank you, Lord.

May we each drink deeply from the water of life you offer, and may it well up to be an overflowing spring, reaching everyone we encounter upon the way.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen.

Child extinguishes candle cluster

6. The Word of Triumph- read by Church member

John 19:30

When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

At the cross, Jesus won **the** victory- the only victory that matters, the only victory that counts. Paul can tell us in Colossians 2 that, at the cross, Christ disarmed all the powers and authorities that ruin and spoil and destroy; at the cross, Jesus triumphed over them all and made a public spectacle of them.

His cry of, *It is finished* is known as the Word of Triumph. And this triumph can be hard to see, because Jesus died. Sin seemed to have won; brokenness seemed to have conquered; death seemed to have had the last word and the final say.

The triumph at the cross can so easily be lost and missed- because it happened in darkness, it happened in shame, it happened in agony.

The triumph can seem empty and hollow- it certainly looked that way to its witnesses. The friends and followers of Christ who stood at the foot of the cross had no thought of victory- hope is lost, sin has won, death has conquered.

Their world, like ours, was full of pain; their world, like ours, was full of sin; their world, like ours, still bore all the brokenness and twistedness of the Fall.

And it would have been so easy for them, just as it is so easy for us, to assume that this cry of, *It is finished*, has nothing to do with triumph, but instead, defeat.

Because how could death on a cross be a triumph? How could the agony, the shame, the humiliation, be a victory? How could black skies and a God-forsaken Messiah be a conquest?

How could the scheming and paranoia, the cowardice and greed of the priests and politicians that led to this cross mean anything but defeat for Jesus and His followers?

Even today, the brokenness of life in this fallen world can often look more like defeat than triumph. We can feel more like being conquered than being more than conquerors.

And yet, even in our darkest valleys and most terrifying storms, we have the assurance that, in some way that we cannot fully understand and will not fully see until we meet the Lord face to face, it truly is finished.

Our debt has been paid, our death has been died, our punishment has been borne. God's love is so great, so rich, so full and free, that He took everything that stands against us, everything should leave us ruined and lost, everything that should break us and kill us, and He **finished it** at the cross.

In the grace that speaks first, that moves first, that welcomes first, He gave us a Saviour before we knew we needed salvation. He gave us a Rescuer before we knew we were drowning. He spoke words of life over us before we knew we were dying.

And He made an end of all our sin, before we knew that we stood condemned by it.

Jesus could cry out this word of triumph, because He had done as the author to the Hebrews puts it- *He endured the cross, scorning its shame*. He had run His race, He had completed the task the Father had set Him, He had taken all that the brokenness of the world could throw at Him, He had refused all the temptations the Enemy hurled at Him.

He had lived in fallen flesh in a fallen world, facing everything that had drawn away and drawn aside every man and woman since the first man and woman. He had witnessed firsthand the distortion and corruption of the beloved Creation that He had formed to be *good, very good*.

He had endured what we endure, suffered what we suffer, carried what we carry, and much more besides. And yet He had stayed the course, He had run His race with perseverance, He had finished and finished well. And in His finish, love has utterly, perfectly made its point; in His finish, love has utterly, perfectly won.

Heavenly Father, thank you for the love that bore so much for us. Thank you for the love that endured so much, that suffered so much. Thank you that in Jesus Christ, love became flesh and blood, and gave that flesh and blood to be broken and poured out.

*Thank you that each of us can testify this morning, **Yes, Jesus loves me**. If we ever doubt it, all we need do is look to the cross.*

*We praise you, Lord, that you finished the course, you ran the race, and you did it all for us. Each of us can say, you did it all for **me**. Thank you, Lord.*

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Child extinguishes candle cluster

7. The Word of Reunion- read by Pastor

Luke 23:44-46

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.

It was finally over. At the cross, Jesus had endured suffering we simply cannot imagine. The physical agony alone was inhuman. After being whipped to the bone, after being beaten and abused, He was pierced by iron nails and left to hang on the cross for hours while He slowly asphyxiated.

But it wasn't just physical- the emotional agony was excruciating. Crucifixion was reserved for the lowest of the low- for slaves and rebels. Those who barely even counted as human. Stripped and humiliated, left to listen to the abuse and mockery of those He loved, those for whom He came, those for whom He hung on that very cross.

And to crown it all, the unimaginable heartache of that break in the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit- separation in that timeless and eternal dance. There are just not the words.

But now it ends, not with complaint, not with bitterness, not with doubt, but with trust, with anticipation, with the word of reunion. Because through it all, through the pain, through the separation, through the crushing weight of sin, He still knew that God's way is always best, God's will is always good and pleasing and perfect, God does all things well, even this. Even now.

Even with dark skies and shaking ground, even though the words come with tears, they are still words of trust, words of hope, words that speak of a deep assurance that God is love.

Love is not just something He does, it is the very heart and core of who He is. That means that everything He says and does is driven and fuelled by love, it is an expression and the working out of love, it is the proof of His world re-shaping, reality re-defining love- even when it means dying on a cross.

And that means that, through it all, Christ had the assurance that this wasn't the end of the story, and it wasn't a defeat. He could entrust Himself into the hands of the Father, who would make even this beautiful- He would take even this darkness, this pain, this absolute brokenness, and use it for the highest good imaginable.

The brokenness of the world lashes out at us in very different ways. Our suffering doesn't look like a cross, but it takes a thousand different forms, each of which conspire to break us, and more importantly, to break our trust that God is love, and that love is always the first and last word in all of His work in us and for us.

These last words from the cross of Christ, this cry of assurance from the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith, it reminds us that we, too, can trust in the will and way of God. Because if His love led to the cross; if His love found its ultimate and most perfect expression in this act of relentless, passionate, extravagant grace, then surely it won't abandon us now.

Surely it won't give up on us now. Surely it won't forsake us now. Surely even the places we find ourselves now, the burdens we're carrying now, the issues we're facing now, surely even in this place dealing with these things, God is still love.

May we never get tired of hearing the truth that the cross is not proof of how angry God is at us; it is not a symbol of how much He hates us, nor even primarily a symbol of how much He hates our sin. The cross is not about God being primed and ready to destroy us, and then at the last minute Christ throwing Himself on the grenade.

No, may we accept in the very deepest places of ourselves, may we allow to sink into our bones and saturate our souls the truth that the cross, before and after it is anything else, above and beyond it being anything else, is a statement of love. It is proof of how far love will go to make love's point; proof of just what love will do to make love's point.

And that means that right where you are, in the mess you've made of things, in the trials that whisper God has forgotten you, right in the middle of it all, you are still loved, still precious, still inexpressibly dear to the heart of God.

May we pray with the same trust and the same faith that Christ had on the cross, knowing that the God into whose hands we have entrusted ourselves, loves us enough to take perfect, tender care of us.

Heavenly Father, we cannot measure your love for us. We can't earn it or deserve it, we can't be worthy of it, nor can we be thankful enough for it. But Lord, may we never doubt it. And may we follow in the footsteps of Christ who could trust you even as He hung dying on the cross. Wherever we find ourselves, whatever we face, may we cling to the love of God for us, the love made manifest for us in Christ.

And may that love be a constant, perfect comfort for us in all the places to which we return this evening, in all the broken places where we find ourselves doing life.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Child extinguishes candle cluster

- **Congregation- And Can It Be [new version by Lou Fellingham]- v1-3**

***And can it be that I should gain
An int'rest in the Saviour's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, should die for me?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, should die for me!***

***'Tis mystery all! Th'Immortal dies!
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine!
'Tis mercy all! let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.
'Tis mercy all! let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.***

***He left His Father's throne above,
So free, so infinite His grace;
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race;
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
For, O my God, it found out me.
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
For, O my God, it found out me.***

One candle remains lit. Darkness has grown throughout our time together, until the light is all but extinguished, because with those friends and followers gathered around the cross, we are confronted with the fact that Christ died.

Love came into the world, and sin killed Him.

And it was dark, and it was hard. This service has been hard, and it's meant to be.

You know by now how I view the Lord's Supper, and how essential it is to Christian worship- but not today. This is the one day where we don't celebrate the Eucharist, where we don't join together for the Lord's Supper. Someone has said that ***this day we come to a full, silent stop at the foot of the cross.***

This is the one worship service in the entire year where we talk about death winning- we won't even contemplate it any other day of the year; Paul even talks about God's people *falling asleep*, because he doesn't want to give death any kind of credit at all.

But today... today we lean into the fact that, even though it was just for a instant in eternity, death won. Sin conquered. The Enemy triumphed.

And yet... and yet one candle remains.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

[John 1:5]

Because we know that darkness does not have the last word- light does; sin does not have the last word- love does; death does not have the last word- life does.

And so this service doesn't end with a song. It doesn't end with laughter and joy. It doesn't end with refreshments next door. It doesn't

end comfortably. All the usual signs of life in our congregation will be absent after our last amen today.

In fact, you won't even receive a benediction today- because that comes at the end of the service, and this service isn't over. It won't be over until our final amen on Sunday.

No, instead of a benediction this evening I will pray and we'll together respond with the amen. The final candle, the Christ candle, will be carried out, just as our Lord's body was carried out.

And I'd invite you to follow it as we just... leave.

In silence.

And it will hurt. It will be uncomfortable. It will seem unnatural. And it should. Because this is Friday, the ultimate climax of the brokenness and out-of-stepness of Creation.

But it's only Friday. That candle still burns, even if we can't see it, because we know that Sunday is coming. And, like those first believers, if we can just hold on, all of our brokenness will be worth it, all of our pain and discomfort and awkwardness, it will all be redeemed, and this tiny, solitary flame will be just one small part of the blazing light of God's victory.

Lord Jesus, we wait here by your tomb
carrying our grief;
the grief of the betrayer,
the grief of the denier,
the grief of the crucifiers.
We carry the grief of the lost,
the heartbroken, the bereft.
Upon you was laid the grief of us all.
It is finished.
God of endings, God of darkness,
God of the tomb, God of dark days and great loss,
be with us now as we wait with Jesus.

***And now, as you go into the dark, remember that there is a light that
shines that not even death can extinguish;***

As you go into the dark, remember that even now new life is dawning;

***As you go into the dark, go in the sure and certain hope that Christ is
with you.***

***And may you return on Sunday with the same awe and wonder, the
same joy and celebration as those who found the tomb open and empty.***

Amen.

Easter Dawn

In John 20, the Apostle writes,

*Very early, on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary
Magdalene went to the tomb.*

Like her, we've had to wait in the darkness. Like Mary, we've had to accept the fact that our Lord, our Love, was crucified.

That, for our sins and for our sake, He went all the way to death.

That, for our rescue and salvation, He bore the full weight of all brokenness and all fallenness; He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

And, like Mary, we've had to endure our own darkness, whatever it looks like. We live on this side of the Resurrection, but sometimes it can be hard to remember that Sunday's coming for us- that in our darkness, in our brokenness, in our pain, dawn is on its way.

When things haven't worked out the way we'd like, the way we'd hoped, the way we thought they would.

When we're like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, on this same morning almost two millennia ago, and our faces are downcast.

Like Peter, we feel like failures. We've done things and gone places and fallen short in ways we never thought we would.

Like John, we're so heartbroken that we can't even bring ourselves to believe that things could ever be OK again, that things could ever be right again, that things could ever be whole again.

Like Mary, so often it's easy to feel like it's still dark.

But, like Mary, we'll discover that it won't stay dark for long. Like Mary, we'll soon see that dawn has broken on a new world; we'll soon see that the sun has risen on a new reality; we'll soon see that everything is different, and everything has changed; everything sad is coming untrue and everything that spoils is coming undone.

Because we can affirm this morning- we few gathered together, even when we're apart; we can join with God's people all around the world; we can join with the Church Triumphant, already gathered around the Throne room of Heaven; we can join with the eternal chorus of angels and archangels in singing,

*Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
To receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
And honour and glory and praise!*

We can join the song at the heart of Creation itself,

*To Him who sits on the Throne and to the Lamb
Be praise and honour and glory and power,
For ever and ever!*

Even while it still seems dark, when we're still so painfully aware of the sharp edges and broken pieces of a badly broken world, and all the ways they cut so deep, and all the ways they bruise so badly, even then and even there we can sing.

Even then and even there we can know rock solid, iron clad hope.

Because everything has changed. Death itself has been laid in the grave. Darkness hasn't had the last word, light has; brokenness hasn't had the last word, healing has; ugliness hasn't had the last word, beauty has; sin hasn't had the last word, Love has; and death hasn't had the last word, Resurrection has.

Because the acclamation with which God's people have greeted each other on this morning since the earliest days of the faith, it remains true today; the acclamation our sisters and brothers on the other side of the world have greeted each other with, and that our sisters and brothers on the **other** other side of the world will soon greet each other with, it remains true for us.

It remains true wherever we are and whatever we face and however dark it seems, and so even here and even now we can proclaim together with joy and with gladness, with certainty and celebration, Christ is risen! He's risen indeed!

***Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;
endless is the vict'ry Thou o'er death hast won.
Angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave-clothes where Thy body lay.
Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;
endless is the vict'ry Thou o'er death hast won.***

***Lo, Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb.
Lovingly He greets us, scatters fear and gloom;
let His church with gladness hymns of triumph sing,
for the Lord now liveth; death hath lost its sting.
Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;
endless is the vict'ry Thou o'er death hast won.***

***No more we doubt Thee, glorious Prince of life!!
Life is nought without Thee; aid us in our strife;
make us more than conqu'rors, through Thy deathless love;
bring us safe through Jordan to Thy home above.
Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;
endless is the vict'ry Thou o'er death hast won.***

When Christ called to Mary; when the darkness of night and the darkness of death and the darkness of sin had been broken and banished forever, Christ commissioned this Apostle to the Apostles to tell the 11, *I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.*

Through the perfect, cosmic, eternal victory of Christ, we are brought into the divine community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We have the absolute certainty that we are welcomed, embraced, accepted, and kept by the God who has conquered, and His conquest is so complete and so perfect and so eternal that absolutely nothing is off limits to the power of the Resurrection.

It can reach the tomb, it can reach Hell itself, and it can even reach us.

It can reach our relationships that seem irreparably broken; it can reach our loved ones whose hearts seem impenetrably hard.

The full force of the Resurrection can touch us on our sick beds, and it can even touch us on our death beds; the Resurrection can break through addictions and it can break through failure; the Resurrection is greater and stronger than our past, than our doubts, than our anxieties.

Nothing and no-one is outside of the scope of the Resurrection. Because the God who lived and died and rose in triumph, invites you to be a part of His life. He invites us, He invites you, to call Him Father.

And if God is for us, who then could be against us?

If God is with us, what could ever stop us?

If God has done so much and gone so far to set us free, what could possibly hold us captive ever again? If He paid such a price and won such a victory to shine His light, what shadow could ever withstand it?

Do you know, dawn in Llay this morning was at 5:32, and it's now _____, and I'm not sure if you can see it, but it's still pretty dark here. But however it looks and however it feels, the fact remains- dawn has broken.

In our own hearts, our own lives, our own situations and circumstances, it might still feel pretty dark. But nevertheless, dawn has broken. Sister, brother- dawn has broken for you and for yours.

Even when it still feels so very dark, a new day is here, a new day has arrived.

Because Christ is risen, He is risen indeed.

Prayer

And now, may the risen Christ be with you and yours, as you go into the world He loves as ambassadors and heralds of the Resurrection.

Easter Day

- **Video- We believe [Nicene Creed]-**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sX3vaEWQHBo&t=2s>

Welcome and acclamation- Pastor

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!

Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not in the tomb, because Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!

He is the First and the Last, the Living One. He was dead, and now look, He is alive for ever and ever, and He holds the keys of death and Hades.

Today of all days we celebrate with saints and angels around the world and around the Throne in proclaiming the truth that has remade Creation; the fact that death has been swallowed up in victory; its sting has been plucked; it has itself been laid in the grave.

Today is the Day of days, when we celebrate that the light and momentary triumph darkness seemed to have won on Friday has been torn apart and blown to bits, as sin and death and Hell were dealt a wound from which they will never recover, because today we can proclaim with joy and with confidence and with a shout of victory, that Christ is risen, **He is risen indeed!**

Hallelujah!

- Congregation- Anastasis

*I cast my mind to Calvary
Where Jesus bled and died for me
I see His wounds, His hands, His feet
My Saviour on that cursed tree*

*His body bound and drenched in tears
They laid Him down in Joseph's tomb
The entrance sealed by heavy stone
Messiah still and all alone*

*O praise the Name of the Lord our God
O praise His Name forevermore
For endless days we will sing Your praise
Oh Lord, oh Lord our God*

*Then on the third at break of dawn
The Son of heaven rose again
O trampled death where is your sting?
The angels roar for Christ the King*

*O praise the Name of the Lord our God
O praise His Name forevermore
For endless days we will sing Your praise
Oh Lord, oh Lord our God*

*He shall return in robes of white
The blazing sun shall pierce the night
And I will rise among the saints
My gaze transfixed on Jesus' face*

O praise the Name of the Lord our God
O praise His Name forevermore
For endless days we will sing Your praise
Oh Lord, oh Lord our God

O praise the Name of the Lord our God
O praise His Name forevermore
For endless days we will sing Your praise
Oh Lord, oh Lord our God

Oh Lord, oh Lord our God

- Congregation- Victor's Crown

You are always fighting for us
Heaven's angels all around
My delight is found in knowing
That You wear the Victor's crown

You're my help and my defender
You're my Saviour and my friend
By Your grace I live and breathe to worship You

At the mention of Your greatness
In Your Name I will bow down
In Your presence fear is silent
For You wear the Victor's crown

Let Your glory fill this temple
Let Your power overflow
By Your grace I live and breathe to worship You

Hallelujah
You have overcome
You have overcome
Hallelujah
Jesus, You have overcome the world

You are ever interceding
As the lost become the found
You can never be defeated
For You wear the Victor's crown
You are Jesus the Messiah
You're the Hope of all the world
By Your grace I live and breathe to worship You

Hallelujah
You have overcome
You have overcome
Hallelujah
Jesus, You have overcome the world

Every high thing must come down
Every stronghold shall be broken
You wear the Victor's crown
You have overcome, You have overcome

Every high thing must come down
Every stronghold shall be broken
You wear the Victor's crown
You have overcome, You have overcome

At the cross the work was finished
You were buried in the ground
But the grave could not contain You
For You wear the Victor's crown

Hallelujah
You have overcome
You have overcome
Hallelujah
Jesus, You have overcome the world

Reading One- Luke 24:1-12

Narrator One:

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them,

Angel One:

“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee:

Angel Two:

‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’ ”

Narrator One:

Then they remembered his words.

Narrator Two:

When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. But they did not believe the women, because their words

seemed to them like nonsense. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

- **Video- God's Wonderful Surprise-**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nfnhv5hok4M&t=167s>
- **Congregation- Grace to grace**

***If love endured that ancient cross
How precious is my Saviour's blood
The beauty of heaven wrapped in my shame
The image of love upon death's frame***

***If having my heart was worth the pain
What joy could You see beyond the grave
If love found my soul worth dying for***

***How wonderful, how glorious
My Saviour's scars victorious
My chains are gone, my debt is paid
From death to life and grace to grace***

***If heaven now owns that vacant tomb
How great is the hope that lives in You
The passion that tore through hell like a rose
The promise that rolled back death and its stone***

***If freedom is worth the life You raised
Oh where is my sin, where is my shame?
If love paid it all to have my heart***

***How wonderful, how glorious
My Saviour's scars victorious
My chains are gone, my debt is paid***

From death to life and grace to grace

When I see that cross, I see freedom

When I see that grave, I'll see Jesus

And from death to life, I will sing Your praise

In the wonder of Your grace

When I see that cross, I see freedom

When I see that grave, I'll see Jesus

And from death to life, I will sing Your praise

In the wonder of Your grace

How my soul will sing Your praise

In the wonder of Your grace

How my soul will sing Your praise

How wonderful, how glorious

My Saviour's scars victorious

My chains are gone, my debt is paid

From death to life and grace to grace

- Congregation- *What a beautiful Name*

You were the Word at the beginning

One with God the Lord Most High

Your hidden glory in creation

Now revealed in You our Christ

What a beautiful Name it is

What a beautiful Name it is

The Name of Jesus Christ my King

What a beautiful Name it is

Nothing compares to this

What a beautiful Name it is

The Name of Jesus

You didn't want heaven without us

So Jesus, You brought heaven down

My sin was great, Your love was greater

What could separate us now?

What a wonderful Name it is

What a wonderful Name it is

The Name of Jesus Christ my King

What a wonderful Name it is

Nothing compares to this

What a wonderful Name it is

The Name of Jesus

What a wonderful Name it is

The Name of Jesus

Death could not hold You

The veil tore before You

You silenced the boast of sin and grave

The Heavens are roaring

The praise of Your glory

For You are raised to life again

You have no rival

You have no equal

Now and forever, God You reign

Yours is the kingdom

Yours is the glory

Yours is the Name above all names

What a powerful Name it is

**What a powerful Name it is
The Name of Jesus Christ my King
What a powerful Name it is
Nothing can stand against
What a powerful Name it is
The Name of Jesus**

Reading Two- John 20:1-10

Narrator Three:

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said,

Mary:

“They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

Narrator Four:

So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head.

Narrator Five:

The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

- **Video- He is risen-**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7JGc8atlcI>

Reading Three- John 20:11-18

Narrator Six:

Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

Narrator Seven:

They asked her,

Angel One and Two:

“Woman, why are you crying?”

Mary:

“They have taken my Lord away, and I don’t know where they have put him.”

Narrator Six:

At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

Narrator Seven:

He asked her,

Christ:

“Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”

Narrator Six:

Thinking he was the gardener, she said,

Mary:

“Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

Narrator Seven:

Jesus said to her,

Christ:

“Mary.”

Narrator Six:

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic,

Mary:

“Rabboni!”

Narrator Seven:

which means,

Mary:

“Teacher”

Narrator Seven:

Jesus said,

Christ:

“Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

Narrator Six:

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news:

Mary:

“I have seen the Lord!”

Narrator Six:

And she told them that he had said these things to her.

- **Solo- Christ Is Risen He Is Risen Indeed by Keith & Kristyn Getty**

*How can it be, the One who died
Has borne our sin through sacrifice
To conquer every sting of death
Sing, sing hallelujah*

*For joy awakes as dawning light
When Christ's disciples lift their eyes
Alive He stands, their friend and king
Christ, Christ, He is risen*

Christ is risen, He is risen indeed!

Oh, sing hallelujah

*Join the chorus, sing with the redeemed
Christ is risen, He is risen indeed*

*Where doubt and darkness once had been
They saw Him and their hearts believed
But blessed are those who have not seen
Yet, sing hallelujah*

*Once bound by fear now bold in faith
They preached the truth and power of grace
And pouring out their lives they gained
Life, life everlasting*

Christ is risen, He is risen indeed!

Oh, sing hallelujah

*Join the chorus, sing with the redeemed
Christ is risen, He is risen indeed*

The power that raised Him from the grave
Now works in us to powerfully save
He frees our hearts to live His grace
Go tell of His goodness
Christ is risen, He is risen indeed!
Oh, sing hallelujah
Join the chorist' and all the redeemed

Christ is risen, He is risen indeed
Christ is risen, He is risen indeed!
Oh, sing hallelujah
Join the chorus, sing with the redeemed
Christ is risen, He is risen indeed

He is risen, He's alive, He's alive!
Heaven's gates are opened wide
He's alive, He's alive!
Now in heaven glorified
He's alive, He's alive!
Heaven's gates are opened wide
He's alive, He's alive!
Now in heaven glorified

Reading Four- Acts 10:39-43

Peter One:

“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.

Peter Two:

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. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

- Congregation- Thine be the Glory

Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;
endless is the vict'ry Thou o'er death hast won.
Angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave-clothes where Thy body lay.
Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;
endless is the vict'ry Thou o'er death hast won.

Lo, Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb.
Lovingly He greets us, scatters fear and gloom;
let His church with gladness hymns of triumph sing,
for the Lord now liveth; death hath lost its sting.
Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;
endless is the vict'ry Thou o'er death hast won.

No more we doubt Thee, glorious Prince of life!!
Life is nought without Thee; aid us in our strife;
make us more than conqu'rors, through Thy deathless love;
bring us safe through Jordan to Thy home above.
Thine be the glory, risen, conqu'ring Son;
endless is the vict'ry Thou o'er death hast won.

Reading Five- 1 Corinthians 15:19-26

Paul One:

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

Paul Two:

But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

- Message- Pastor

This morning, we've been on a journey. We began with Mary and the other women who loved the Lord- and it was still dark.

Everything had fallen apart, everything had come undone. They were in a place of despair, a place of brokenness, a place of hopelessness. Everything they had hoped for, everything they'd trusted in, everything they'd relied upon, it had all come to nothing.

Worse than nothing, it had come to the agony and humiliation and terror of a Roman cross.

It was still dark.

But then hope burst in and broke through- incredible, impossible, unimaginable hope- the tomb is empty, the body isn't here, because Christ is risen, He's risen indeed.

Our journey started in darkness, and then came to a place of hope, but almost straightaway, it fell into a pit of doubt and questioning and worrying- the words of Mary, the apostle to the Apostles, the first person in history to preach the message of Resurrection- Luke says it seemed to the other disciples like **nonsense**.

And so this spark of faith, this brief flicker of hope, it seems to have crumbled again- I wonder is that part of the reason Mary wept so painfully. Because she was met with a wall of stubborn, rock solid doubt and disbelief.

But then our journey moves on again- in a way that leaves no more room for questions, no more room for uncertainty, no more room for wondering and worrying. Because Mary no longer needs to rely on messengers, she no longer has to trust in the words of others, even the words of angels; she no longer has to question what she's seen and heard and come to believe- because in a way that drives out all darkness, in a way that dispels all fear, in a way that changes everything for her and for all and forevermore, Mary sees her risen, conquering Lord!

And so Peter, one of those who just wasn't sure, who just couldn't bring himself to believe, even after he saw the empty tomb and the strips of funereal linen, even Peter can stand and preach about the One whom God raised from death, the One appointed as Judge of the living and the dead, the One who offers to everyone, everywhere, the forgiveness of sins through His Name.

And so, we have to ask, where do we find ourselves along that journey?

Are we still in a place of darkness? Still painfully aware of the brokenness of this old, fallen world? Like those women early on Easter morning, we've been tricked into thinking we're all alone- we have no refuge, no sanctuary, no rock to which we can cling when the waves of life are beating against us.

And those waves are so big and so strong- they're too big and too strong, and we just can't hold on any longer. And when John the Evangelist writes about their trip to the empty tomb and says **it was still dark**, we get it, we feel it, we're right there with them, because we're looking at our life, we're looking at our circumstances, we're looking at our situations- and it's dark.

Paul describes that life as being worthy of pity- because there's no hope. There's no light. There's no way out and no way through. And so many of us have been there- and some of us are there right now.

It's dark.

Or perhaps there are those with us who've had some glimmer of light breaking through- we think this season of darkness and difficulty is passing, there seems to be an answer, a resolution; there seems to be healing and help- like the women as they rush back to the Upper Room to tell the others the message of the angels.

And then that hope is snuffed out- it's nonsense. Because the answer is snatched away from us. That light we thought we could see, it's gone. In the blink of an eye, things go back to the way there were, the situation resets to how it's been, and we feel like we're back where we started- in darkness.

But friend, although it may be hard to see and hard to believe; although our vision may be obscured with tears; although all of our situations

and all of our circumstances may try to convince us otherwise, Jesus Christ is risen, He's risen indeed.

Our Lord really and truly is what we've sung this morning- our risen, conquering King. He really is the One Paul talks about- the One who has triumphed, even over death itself, and is at work even now putting all brokenness, all that's ruined, all that's spoiled, all of **His** enemies and all of **ours**, under His feet, until death itself, in all of its terrible disguises, is finally, eternally destroyed.

Where are you on that journey? In a place of darkness and defeat? Know this morning that the tomb is empty; know this morning that the angels spoke the truth; know this morning that death has been swallowed up in victory, death has been laid in the grave, death has been and is being and will be trampled under the feet of our triumphant King- and know, without a shadow of a doubt, that you are caught up in that victory.

You are carried along by that victory.

And nothing- no power of Hell nor scheme of man- can steal that victory from you. Wherever you are right now, Christ is still risen. Whatever you face right now, Christ is still risen. Whatever is coming against you right now; whatever tries to whisper in your ear, **It's all nonsense**; however many tears obscure your sight, nevertheless, always and forever, in a way that can't be stopped or changed or reversed- Christ is still risen, He's risen indeed.

And once we've accepted that truth and put our trust in that reality, we can be like Mary and Peter and Paul- we can launch out into a world that's still in darkness, a world that's still badly broken, a world that's still full of tears, and be messengers of the Resurrection; heralds of God's victory; ambassadors of the Kingdom of light and life and liberty that has broken out right in the midst of all of this brokenness.

Because there are folks in our life, folks in our office, folks in our streets and our classrooms and in all the different places where we do life, and they're still in darkness.

They haven't seen the empty tomb. They haven't met the risen Lord. And so all they can see is the sharp edges and broken pieces of this world that is still so far from what it should be and what we need it to be, and for them it's still dark. For them there are still tears.

But we who have seen the risen Lord; we who have had Him wipe away our tears; we who have entered into the new reality ushered in by His Resurrection, we have the privilege of telling them that death is dead and love has won and Christ has conquered!

We have the privilege of telling them that Christ has burst through the other side of death, and He comes to the blind and He offers them sight; He comes to the lost and He brings them home; He comes to those who have fallen so low and He lifts them up; He comes to the dead and He brings them into the fullness of His glorious life, and life eternal.

All of us are somewhere on this journey. Some of us are in the darkness of circumstances and situations that are just too hard and just too much; some of us are seeing the first glimmers of light, but we're just not sure if we can trust in it, because too many times before, it's been snuffed out or snatched away.

And to you, it's my privilege on this Day of all days, on the Day we remember the crux of history and the turning point of eternity; it's my honour on this Day when we celebrate the fact that everything sad is coming untrue and everything broken is coming undone; it's my joy to announce this morning that there really is hope, and it's rock solid and ironclad.

There really is light, and nothing will ever be able to put it out.

There really is life, life eternal, life to the full, and it's yours for the taking, because Jesus Christ is alive, and death shall never again have any hold on Him, and that means that death, in all of its dreadful shapes and forms and schemes will never again have any hold on His people.

For you, stumbling through the darkness, longing to believe, yearning for light, this Day of days means that hope is here, hope is yours, all you need to do is accept it and receive it.

And when you do, and if you have, you are commissioned as heralds and messengers and ambassadors of that light and that salvation and that Resurrection. Like Mary, like Peter, like Paul, like all of God's people throughout time and space, we are caught up in the mission of salvation.

Because if this Resurrection message stays in the Sanctuary today, then we've missed the point.

If we sing and shout and celebrate and rejoice here, and then go back to our homes and streets and offices and relationships and keep it locked up and sealed away inside until next Easter, then we just haven't got it.

Because Jesus Christ didn't just come into the world to save me; He didn't just triumph over sin and death and Hell to rescue you.

Peter says that **everyone** can be a part of this Story of Salvation; Paul says that Christ lives so that **all** might be made alive in Him.

And so each of us and all of us this morning are sent like Mary; called like Peter; commissioned like Paul, to join in the words of the angels, and ask why people are looking for life in places where there's only death?

Why are they looking for hope in places filled to overflowing with hopelessness? Why are they relying upon and trusting in things that will only ever rob and steal and destroy?

Christ is alive, and in Him there is life for all, life forever- and we are called to share that life with everyone, everywhere, until they are all caught up into the Resurrection life of Christ.

And as a sign and symbol of it all, we're going to gather with joy around the Lord's Table. Because sometimes we can forget that this is a Resurrection Meal. Every time we worship like this, the Risen Christ is with us- He's the One who welcomes us, He's the One who says **Take, eat, drink, give thanks.**

He's the One who testifies through these elements, yes, there was a day when it really did look like death and sin and brokenness had won- but their light and momentary triumph has been swallowed up by the unstopping, never ending, always overcoming Resurrection victory of God.

If you're still in darkness, light breaks through at this Table; if your eyes are still obscured with tears, Christ waits to wipe them away in this Meal; if you're just not sure how someone like you could ever be a part of carrying Resurrection hope to the parts and places of your life, Christ resources and equips through this blessed sacrament.

And for all of us, wherever we are, our risen, conquering King waits to meet with us here.

**Lord our God,
You gave your Son to live and die and rise in triumph for us and for the world you love;
By His death He has destroyed death,
and by His rising to life again He has restored to us everlasting life.**

**Feed and nourish us now, Lord,
And make us more and more who we truly are-
The people of God,
Children of light and life,
Ambassadors of the Good News,
And heralds of your Kingdom.**

The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks He broke it and said, *Take and eat; this is my body, given for you; do this in remembrance of me.*

In the same way, after supper Christ took the cup, saying, *This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.*

And on this Easter morning, I'm going to take the liberty of serving you all. When you're ready, come and receive the bread and the cup; take it back to your seats, and when you're ready you can eat with thanksgiving the bread of Heaven.

And then, when all have been served, we'll drink together from the cup of salvation.

Christ is risen,

He's risen indeed.

So drink with joy.

*Lord of life,
with joy we offer you our sacrifice of praise.
As we've been fed with the bread of heaven,
As we've drank from the cup of salvation,
may we know for ourselves your resurrection power,
And may it overflow from us into all the parts and places of our life;
Because we pray through Jesus Christ our risen Lord.
Amen.*

- Congregation- *See what a morning*

*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!*

*This voice that spans the years
Speaking life, stirring hope, bringing peace to us
Will sound 'til 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*

*Honour 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!*

*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!*