

## EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 12, 2020

Rev. Rick Hawley

Today I am sending you a condensed Easter Service for you to use in your own homes. You may read it today or save it for Sunday if you wish. I would also remind you that there are many services online from churches that are technically well equipped and have people with expertise to bring worship to your home. The church where I am a member, Trinity, Beamsville, is one of them as well as my daughters' church, Norval United in Georgetown. You can watch these services and others via YouTube.

### **INVITATION TO WORSHIP**

This is the celebration of Easter:  
the celebration of resurrection,  
the festival of hope,  
the promise of new beginnings  
the dance of faith  
the song of joy  
the music of gladness  
the hymn of love.  
Let us worship our life giving God!

**EASTER HYMN** #155 "Christ the Lord is Risen Today" *(If you are a singer you will know the tune, if not just read the words)*

Christ the Lord is risen today, hallelujah (\*each line is followed by hallelujah)  
All creation join to say \*  
Raise your joys and triumphs high\*  
Sing O heavens and earth reply \*

Loves redeeming work is done\*  
Fought the fight the battle won\*  
Lo, our sun's eclipse is o'er\*  
Lo, he dwells on earth no more!\*

Lives again our glorious King\*  
Where, O death is now your sting? \*  
Once he died, our souls to save\*  
Where your victory, O grave?\*

Hail the Lord of earth and heaven\*  
Praise to you by both be given\*  
Every knee to you shall bow\*  
Risen Christ triumphant now. \*

## **GATHERING PRAYER**

God of renewed presence, on this Easter Day, we know that with you all things are possible. May the good news of Easter joy fill our lives and make our hearts g

## **SCRIPTURE:** Luke 24: 1-12

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 Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightening stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “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: “The son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be risen again.” Then they remembered his words. When they went back from the tomb, they roll all these things to the eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalen, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and the others with them that 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. (NIV)

**CONVERSATION WITH THE CHILDREN AND THE YOUNG AT HEART** (A separate message has been sent from me to the young people via Stephanie)

## **THE MESSAGE:** “We are alive in the Nonsense”

Did you hear that? Hear what was in Luke’s account of Jesus’ resurrection? Did you hear the reaction of those closest to Jesus? Listen again, “But they (the Apostles) did not believe the women because their words seemed to them like nonsense.”

Isn’t that a fascinating verse to include in the account of the resurrection?

We hear today the greatest story: death is defeated, sin holds no power to destroy us, a wondrous realm awaits us, there can be new life now.

Here we are at Easter and what do we hear? We hear from those closest to Jesus in his 3 year ministry, those who heard him preach on the hillside and beside the water, those who witnessed the miracles, those who had broken bread with him, as only friends can, in the intimacy of an upper room, those who heard him teach with patience about the realm of God ..... now we hear that when they heard the amazing story of the empty tomb they thought it was nonsense! Does that not rattle the timbers of your faith a bit? Have we not always had the image of the disciples as the true followers of Jesus, the eye witnesses to Jesus’ ministry? I mean, if they hadn’t shared what they’d seen and heard, we wouldn’t have a story to tell today. Here they are now, these people of faith, these

**THE MESSAGE** *cont'd...*

people who told about his new realm he was establishing, those he actually told about what would happen after three days, they thought it was an idle tale, it was nonsense to them! But you know what? They were right! It was nonsense to them! Who ever heard of someone regaining life after being dead for three days? Preposterous! The brain cells would have died, the body would be decomposing. It's nonsense to think that someone who went through the agony of a crucifixion and had the life and breath squeezed out of him could suddenly have enough strength to walk out of a damp, dark tomb.

The whole resurrection story is such nonsense. It defies medical explanation. It goes against rational thinking. It just isn't possible. But our Christian story affirms that it did happen. It's nonsense, but it happened. It is incredulous, but that is our story. It is the centrality of our story! I believe that one of the biggest problems in Christianity is that people want to take the nonsense out of it. I've heard all sorts of evangelists tell me that Christianity makes perfect sense, that it is that easiest, most natural thing in the world to believe in Christ. I've been told and preached at and almost been convinced that being a follower of Jesus is "easy peasy", that the miracles and healings and accounts of Jesus life, some of them preposterous to the modern mind, are easy to accept.

I've been told that it's logical to believe in someone who walked this earth 2,000 years ago in an obscure corner of creation, someone who performed miracles, fed 5,000 people with a few loaves and fish, who raised his friend from the dead, who walked on water even! Tell me, is it logical to believe something that happened so long ago and so far away, something that defies medical, scientific, rational explanation? No way! It is as the disciples say, nonsense! To believe any of this would be to accept what is not possible. Believing in an event, a story that is so radical would require a complete change in one's perception of life. To believe the women's story, who ran from the tomb that first Easter morning, is to be stuck believing something so new, so different, so radical, that one's life would have to change to be new, different and radical as a result of that belief. It is nonsense, this story of resurrection. It is precisely because it is nonsense, precisely because it defies expectation, precisely because it is radical, that our lives have changed. And if yours hasn't, it can. I am very comfortable holding two opposing views. I can believe in this nonsense story and I will tell you why.

Because Jesus lives:

I can live too.

I can love my enemy.

I can pray for those who try me.

I can turn the other cheek.

I can forgive those who hurt me.

I can hope when life seems hopeless.

That is radical. That is not the way of the world.

To be Christian means to live in the nonsense of the resurrection, to live into a radical new life because our story says the tomb is empty. Jesus lives and is here with us now. Christ's spirit is among us even now.

**THE MESSAGE** *cont'd*

God knows that we live in a time of incredible darkness in the midst of the unknown and fear. Illness is all about us. People, sometimes family and friends are sick and dying and we cannot comfort them. Our economy is in big trouble, many have lost their jobs and their income. Those that do work, medical folk, first responders, grocery clerks and others put their lives on the line in service. Our government struggles to find the myriad of ways that they can assist people without having had any experience like this before from which to draw upon. We are all fearful of the future.

The Easter Message proclaims to the world that God calls us out of our graves of fear to this resurrection life.

Because of Easter:

love conquers hate,

goodness triumphs over evil,

hope triumphs over despair.

We are a new people, an Easter people. We believe in an amazing, nonsensical story which we share with love.

It is a story of hope in the midst of a world that sees few signs of hope. It teaches us to reach out beyond our own concerns to the needs of others, loving God's creation and those who share it with us. We are an Easter people, living in the nonsense of the resurrection. I tell you this day, Jesus lives and so can we.

We can live radical lives of faith and love and hope and joy.

He is risen. He is risen indeed.

And the people said.....

**PRAYER TIME**

Would you pray with me...

Surprising, creating Easter God, we gather each in our own homes on this festival day of resurrection. We shelter at home as we shelter in your mercy. We are reminded once again that we can never be separated from your love. It is difficult to celebrate Easter with our world turned upside down and inside out. But we are an Easter people.

Therefore we are not people of fear, but people of courage. We are not people who just protect our own safety, but people who also protect our neighbour's safety. We are not people of greed, but people of generosity.

We are your people, giving and loving wherever we are, whatever it costs, for as long as it takes, wherever you call us to be. And so today with Easter faith in things that are possible even when they seem impossible because we live in the nonsense of Easter. We pray today for all who are affected by this virus, through illness or isolation or anxiety, that they may find relief and recovery. We pray for those guiding our nation at this time, shaping national policies that they might make wise decisions.

**PRAYER TIME** *cont'd...*

We pray for doctors and medical researchers that through their skills and insights many may be restored to health. We pray for all those working in essential services and their families, that they might feel appreciated and that they might keep well.

We pray for those who are vulnerable and fearful, those who are isolated, that we might be aware of their needs.

And of course, loving God, we pray for those who are ill and dying, that they might know and feel your comfort and grace. Remind us always that we are never alone, for you are with us always.

And so we pray together, Our Father.....

Amen

**CLOSING HYMN** “The Easter Celebration”

*(This hymn is written for our time and is sung to the tune of The Church's One Foundation. #331 in Voices United. Again if you are not a singer read the words. They are very meaningful)*

Words: Carolyn Winfrey. 2020

Music: Samuel Sebastian Wesley 1864

This Easter celebration is not like ones we've known.

We pray in isolation, we sing the hymns alone.

We're distant from our neighbours, from worship leaders too.

No flowers grace the chancel to set a festive mood.

No gathered choirs are singing, no banners lead the way.

O God of love and promise where's joy this Easter Day?

With sanctuaries empty, May homes become the place  
we ponder resurrection and celebrate your grace.

Our joy won't come from worship that's in a crowded room  
but from the news of women who saw the empty tomb.

Our joy comes from disciples who ran with haste to see  
who heard that Christ is risen, and then by grace believed.

In all the grief and suffering may we remember well

Christ suffered crucifixion and faced the powers of hell.

Each Easter hears the promise, Christ rose that glorious Day!

Now nothing in creation can keep your love away.

We thank you that on Easter your church is blessed to be  
a scattered, faithful body that's doing ministry.

In homes and in the places of help and healing too,  
we live the Easter message by gladly serving you.

**BENEDICTION**

Let us go to live our song of joy and praise.

We go to be God's people of hope walking with hope in a somber time.

For we are an Easer people!

He is risen! He is risen indeed!

Hallelujah!

Now my dear friends, go and have a coffee or tea and a goodie and remember all those you so love at St. Davids-Queenston.

Blessings, Rick