

HOME CHURCH
EASTER
SUNDAY
DAWN
SERVICE

BY

RAILWAY STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A GUIDE FOR REFLECTION

Please use this guide from your home for an Easter Sunday reflection at dawn (6.30-7am). This reflection includes songs, prayers, readings and a short thought. Feel free to adapt any of it to suit you and your family. We pray that this reflection would bless you as you use it to grow in your love, trust and hope in God. And so, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.” - Romans 15:13

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CHRIST IS RISEN

HE IS RISEN INDEED

As you come to worship the risen Christ, let's read the beginning of Psalm 98. Let's remind ourselves of the new song that Easter offers, the marvellous things Christ has done, and the faithfulness He has shown to His people.

PSALM 98

1 Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvellous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.

2 The Lord has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations.

3 He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

PRAISE

Listen to the song See What A Morning by Stuart Townend, which can be found at <https://www.stuarttownend.co.uk/song/resurrection-hymn/>

See what a morning, gloriously bright
With the dawning of hope in Jerusalem;
Folded the grave-clothes
Tomb filled with light,
As the angels announce Christ is risen!
See God's salvation plan, wrought in love,
Borne in pain, paid in sacrifice,
Fulfilled in Christ, the Man, for He lives,
Christ is risen from the dead!

See Mary weeping: 'Where is He laid?
As in sorrow she turns from the empty tomb;
Hears a voice speaking, calling her name:
It's the Master, the Lord raised to life again!
The voice that spans the years,
Speaking life, stirring hope,
Bringing peace to us,
Will sound till He appears,
For He lives, Christ is risen from the dead!

One with the Father, Ancient of Days,
Through the Spirit
Who clothes faith with certainty,
Honour and blessing, glory and praise
To the King crowned
With power 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!

PRAYER

Lord of our Exodus, how great was the joy of Israel when you freed them from slavery in Egypt. How great now is our joy as we celebrate our enemy crushed, our King risen and our path to you restored.

Today we celebrate Jesus as the victor, conquerer of death, hell and sin; bursting free from the clasp of death, trampling the power of darkness and living now forever on his rightful throne. Having paid our debt and carried our cross, we thank you that he burst free from the grave, triumphant. Oh death, where is your sting? Oh grave, where is your victory?

Lord, we thank you that this morning you have shown us proof that Christ's offering was accepted,
that the promise of justice is fulfilled,
and that the devils rule is shattered.

Give me the assurance that in Christ I have died,
in His life I now live,
in His victory I conquer,
and in His accession I shall be glorified.

Gracious God, we worship you who was lifted up on the cross and is now ascended to highest heaven. We worship you, Man of Sorrows who was once crowned with thorns but is now Lord of Life and crowned in glory.

Because of me, there was once no shame deeper than yours, no agony more bitter or death more cruel. But, now, there is no delight more high, no life more glorious and no advocate more effective. You are our king, leading captives to freedom. So help me follow, remembering that

Your death is my life,
Your resurrection my peace,
Your ascension my hope,
Your prayers my comfort.

BIBLE READINGS

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

LUKE 24:1-12

1 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. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 5 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? 6 He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 7 ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’ ” 8 Then they remembered his words.

9 When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. 10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. 11 But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. 12 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.

REVELATION 5

5 Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" 3 But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. 4 I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. 5 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. 8 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. 9 And they sang a new song, saying:

"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.

12 In a loud voice they were saying:

"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honour and glory and praise!"

13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying:

"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power,
for ever and ever!"

14 The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

PRAISE

Listen to the song Is He Worthy? by Andrew Peterson, which can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6FEuAr8f6bo>

Do you feel the world is broken? (We do)
Do you feel the shadows deepen? (We do)
But do you know that all the dark won't stop the light from getting
through? (We do)
Do you wish that you could see it all made new? (We do)

Is all creation groaning? (It is)
Is a new creation coming? (It is)
Is the glory of the Lord to be the light within our midst? (It is)
Is it good that we remind ourselves of this? (It is)

Is anyone worthy? Is anyone whole?
Is anyone able to break the seal and open the scroll?
The Lion of Judah who conquered the grave
He is David's root and the Lamb who died to ransom the slave
Is He worthy? Is He worthy
Of all blessing and honour and glory?
Is He worthy of this?
He is

Does the Father truly love us? (He does)
Does the Spirit move among us? (He does)
And does Jesus, our Messiah, hold forever those He loves? (He
does)
Does our God intend to dwell again with us? (He does)

From every people and tribe
Every nation and tongue
He has made us a kingdom and priests to God
To reign with the Son
Is He worthy? He is!

A SHORT THOUGHT

BY STEVEN WOODS

A few years ago I led a team of 13 young people to Romania alongside two other church members; Daniel & SJ. We partnered with a church in a small village in north western Romania, helping them run kids clubs, teaching english, doing practical work and delivering food parcels to those in the community.

One of the reasons that they desired an overseas team to partner with their church was because they wanted a group to work with the gypsy community that neighboured them. Just a couple of hundred meters down the road lay a street of 16 homes that housed over 300 people. This street was avoided by most of the village; it was dirty, dangerous and in a severe state of disrepair. The gypsy community that lived there had no care for others in the village, often stealing from them and generally causing nuisance. While most of the congregation of the church wanted nothing to do with this community, the pastor knew that the gospel had no borders and so sought to reach out. He wanted us, a group of energetic young people from a different country and culture, to reach into this community, and in doing so, challenge his church to carry on the work we would start.

While most of our work was carried out at the church, where the gypsy community would come during the day, we would sometimes walk down to their street to distribute food and play games with the children. We brought footballs, frisbees and other games, but often the children's favourite thing to do was to climb onto our shoulders and be carried around; one child after the next would tug at our hands and point to our shoulders, usually just after we'd got tired and put the last child down.

I remember one time I had just lifted a child onto my shoulders, when a team member came over and told me that the child

currently on my shoulders had wet himself. Right enough, I could now feel a distinct wet patch on my t shirt. I quickly set him down and pretended to have to talk to someone on the other side of the field. A few minutes later though, I noticed that this same child was on Daniel's shoulders. It was my duty, as a good Christian, I thought, to pay him the same courtesy that had just been paid to me. In hearing this news, Daniel reacted the same way as I did and quickly put the child down. Yet, only a few minutes later I saw that the child had returned to Daniel's shoulders. Thinking that it was a mistake - there were over 100 children here, it was easy to forget who was who - I went over and warned Daniel that he was, again, carrying the child who had wet himself. He responded, "Oh I know, don't worry", a response that I couldn't get my head around until speaking to him later.

Why did he pick up the child again?

Why did he choose, out of over 100 children, to deliberately lift up the child who had wet himself and place him on his shoulders?

Here's what Daniel said...

**"I COULD GO HOME AND CLEAN UP, BUT
RIGHT THEN THE CHILD JUST NEEDED
LIFTED UP AND LOVED."**

These words have helped me understand the gospel and have stuck with me to this day.

In that moment, I began to understand a bit more of what Jesus did for me during the Easter story. I began to understand a bit more of what the message of the gospel is.

Because in the Easter story, I am that child in that gypsy street in a remote village. I am that child that nobody wants to lift on their shoulders because I am unclean. I am that child that can't convince anyone to lift me onto their shoulders because of my looks, actions,

words or any amount of other things we often try to offer. And, in the Easter story, I'm that child that someone reached down to and lifted up onto their shoulders. Someone was willing to carry my sin and shame; willing to get himself messy at personal expense, all because he loved me.

That's what the Easter story is all about. Jesus reaching down and picking us up, despite our sin and shame, and lifting us onto his clean shoulders, carrying us at his expense, because he loves us.

That's the Easter story. Jesus, who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!

Then, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The Easter story involves you and me, but it doesn't end with a trip on someone's shoulders and a brief moment of love being shown. After stepping down in love and lifting the child onto his shoulders, Daniel left him behind at the end of the street as he continued home to shower and change. The good news of Easter is that it continues far beyond that one moment of love shown at the cross; we won't be left at the street corner but we will be carried the whole way home (John 14:3), cleaned up (Hebrews 9:14), given a new set of clothes (Colossians 3:10-17) and enter an eternal home with our heavenly Father (Revelation 20 & 21).

The Easter story is over for Jesus; His work is finished and our place in His Kingdom is secure. But we are not yet home. Our stories in this world continue and day by day we are carried one step closer to our true homes on the shoulders of the risen King Jesus.

This Easter will be different to what we had planned, it will be unlike what we are used to. As we celebrate Easter in the midst of uncertainty, worry and fear, it can seem like we are wandering around hopeless and lost, tugging at anyone and anything we can to lift us onto their shoulders and pick us up out of this mess. But, this Easter, be reminded that you have already been lifted up and placed on the shoulders of your King. He is carrying you home and He knows where He is going.

And so, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever!”



Daniel still carrying the child on our way back to our accommodation.

PRAISE

Listen to the song Living Hope by Phil Wickham, which can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9f2FXxDVO6w>

How great the chasm that lay between us
How high the mountain I could not climb
In desperation, I turned to heaven
And spoke Your name into the night

Then through the darkness, Your loving-kindness
Tore through the shadows of my soul
The work is finished, the end is written
Jesus Christ, my living hope

Who could imagine so great a mercy?
What heart could fathom such boundless grace?
The God of ages stepped down from glory
To wear my sin and bear my shame

The cross has spoken, I am forgiven
The King of kings calls me His own
Beautiful Saviour, I'm Yours forever
Jesus Christ, my living hope

Hallelujah, praise the One who set me free
Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me
You have broken every chain
There's salvation in Your name
Jesus Christ, my living hope

Then came the morning that sealed the promise
Your buried body began to breathe
Out of the silence, the Roaring Lion
Declared the grave has no claim on me
Jesus, Yours is the victory, whoa!