

# St Nicholas Church, Sighthill

## Easter Sunday

### 4<sup>th</sup> April 2021

#### Gathering Praise Song

**Alleluia Alleluia Give Thanks to the Risen Lord**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2U1MuOCHon4>

#### CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Rejoice, rejoice! The tomb is empty,  
what was dead is alive.

**All: With Mary Magdalene we come creeping  
into the light, tears of sadness turned to  
tears of joy, for Jesus is alive!**

Leader: Is this a giant divine joke? Is God having the  
last laugh?

**All: Yes and yes and so much more.  
We come to worship with laughter and  
hope, for life is here..**

Here is part of a prayer that many Christians in this  
country and beyond will say today at 7pm, in response  
to the pandemic.

The journey through the week past began with  
'Hosanna!' and ended in 'Crucify!' In the darkness of  
that morning, it is Mary Magdalene who first senses  
that the journey, seemingly ended on the Cross, has  
yet further to unfold.

Mary remains at the tomb, consumed by sorrow and  
tears, until she finds herself in the company of a  
person whom she does not recognise. Into the depth  
of her sorrow, a voice speaks and calls her by her  
name: 'Mary!' It is as if the voice speaks into the very  
depths of her heart and her eyes are opened. In that  
moment there is the recognition that she stands in  
the presence of the risen Lord and in time Mary will  
bear witness: 'I have seen the Lord'. (John 20: 1-18)

On this day of resurrection, the risen Lord speaks to  
all who have journeyed in dark places and who have  
known sorrow and tears. He speaks into the depths  
of our heart and calls us by our name.

"In response, we join with the people of God  
and proclaim: 'Christ is risen.

**All: He is risen indeed. Alleluia!  
We give thanks to the Risen Lord!**

Leader: Filled with His praises

**All: We give thanks to the Risen Lord.**

Leader: He is our Shepherd,  
and we are His sheep

**All: We give thanks to the Risen Lord!**

Leader: Stepping out boldly,  
we claim resurrection

**All: We give thanks to the risen Lord.**

#### The Lord's Prayer

**It is Easter – Jesus is risen – He is risen indeed.**

**It could not have been worse for them**, really: for Mary  
– the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene and Peter and the  
other disciple whom Jesus loved.

First, they stood by as Jesus suffered and died a painful  
and humiliating death on a Roman Christ. They watched  
helplessly as He was buried in another man's grave.

Then waited through the Passover. It was the Sabbath –  
Saturday – so they couldn't do anything while Jesus lay  
resting in His cold, dark grave.

And then, as soon as she possibly could, in the early light  
of Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene went back to the  
garden where Jesus was buried.

Many of us have been there – back at the cemetery after  
everyone has gone, after all the flowers have been laid -  
we've gone back because we needed to see it again, to  
pay our respects, to say our final goodbyes.

But when Mary arrives – she finds the stone removed from  
the tomb. The giant stone – the one that was guarded by  
soldiers according to Matthew's gospel – that stone has  
been rolled away from the grave.

#### **(Imagine you are at the scene of the story)**

Mary, who has broken through her fear in order to tend  
to body - is standing there in front of an open tomb.

Gospel writer **John does not tell us if she enters or  
even looks in the tomb**. But she perceives that, **because  
the tomb of her beloved friend is open, someone has  
entered it and stolen Jesus' body**.

Grave robbery was not an uncommon occurrence at that  
time. Without looking in the tomb, **Mary runs back to  
tell Peter what she believes has happened**.

Like Mary, Peter and an unnamed disciple, known simply as the **one Jesus loved** run. The unnamed disciple, perhaps younger, arrives first. He (**or she**) looks into the grave, but does not enter. He waits until the Peter arrives and allows Peter to be the first to enter.

**Indeed, Jesus is gone, missing.** But his grave clothes are there. That doesn't make sense. As Peter is standing there, the other disciple comes in.

The John tells us that the unnamed disciple "sees and believes." **But what did he believe?** Does he believe what Mary told them earlier? Namely, that someone had stolen Jesus' body. If so, could it be one of His followers who wanted to make it look like Jesus was raised from the dead?

Maybe it is one of the Roman soldiers who stole the body, fearing that Jesus might rise from the dead as He had promised. Or does he believe what Jesus had said the night of their last meal together, that He had "**conquered the world!**" (John 16:33). What does he believe – we do not know!

Without saying anything else, John reports that the two disciples turn around and go home. There are no shouts of joy, no celebration.

For these two, and at this point, **the emptiness of the tomb does not seem yet to have made a difference.**

Jesus is risen... but there is no celebration... at least at this point. There is also no mention of Easter Eggs and Easter bunnies... Let's hear part of the story... narrated by St John.

### **Bible Reading: John 10:11-18 (NLT)**

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

Mary was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she stooped and looked in. She saw two white-robed angels, one sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying. "Dear woman, why are you crying?" the angels asked her.

"Because they have taken away my Lord," she replied, "and I don't know where they have put him." She turned to leave and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize him. "Dear woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who are you looking for?"

She thought he was the gardener. "Sir," she said, "if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him."

"Mary!" Jesus said. She turned to him and cried out, "Rabboni!" (which is Hebrew for "Teacher"). "Don't cling to me," Jesus said, "for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell them, 'I am

ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!" Then she gave them his message.

### **Prayers of intercession**

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, In Your great mercy, You give us new birth into a living hope Through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. On this day, receive our praise and our thanks forever! Lord, in Your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in Your great mercy, You have journeyed with us through the darkness, and You now bring us to the day of light. Lead us through the darkness and into the abiding light of Your presence. Lord, in Your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, In Your great mercy, You journey with those who have known sorrow and tears. In Your compassion, journey with them still and bring to them healing and the hope of the life everlasting. Lord, in Your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, In Your great mercy, You speak into the depths of our hearts. You call us by our name. Call us by our name that we might proclaim: Christ is risen. Alleluia! Lord, in Your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, In Your great mercy, You give us new birth into a living hope through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. On this day, receive our praise and our thanks forever! Lord, in Your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

### **Hymn: Thine be the glory**

**Ferryhill Parish Church**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BH-ItXIHgHQ>**

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 ...

### **Final prayer/ benediction**

And now to God who is able to keep us from falling, and lift us from the dark valley of despair to the bright mountain of hope, from the midnight of desperation to the day break of joy; from the sunset and darkness of Good Friday to the dawn and light of Easter; to God be power and authority, for ever and ever. Amen.

(slightly adapted from Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-68))