



Church in a Bag

Easter Sunday

Dubbo Uniting Church



A Gathering



Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed!
The peace of the risen Christ be with you.

Preparation

The is the day we have waited for and now it's here, Happy Easter!

Living God, on this most joyous day we offer our thanks and praise to you. Creator of heaven and earth, and lover of all humanity, even when we turned away from you, you never rejected us. God spoke to us with words of mercy and love through the prophets; promising to swallow up death forever and to host a banquet for all people; a feast of life-giving sustenance. Today we celebrate that death has been defeated forever. We celebrate also the language of God's love becoming audible through the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, God's beloved Son, our beloved Lord; and how the nature of God's love became visible through his life and sacrificial love.

Christ the risen one, graced lives with healing and hope, and with compassion and power. As if that were not enough, He gave his very life for us. God of all power, breathe your Holy Spirit upon us today, and help us to celebrate Easter Day.

Reading: John 20:1-18

Reflection

What have you eaten a lot of today – maybe lovely, chocolate eggs? Eggs have come to be a symbol of Easter because they contain life. They remind us of the tomb, which contained not death but life - contained the news that Jesus was alive again in a very special way. On that first Easter morning those who arrived first at the tomb expected to see Jesus' dead body and couldn't understand why the tomb was empty. Actually, the gospel reading portrays a very strange way to begin Easter – Mary is confused by the missing body. Peter does not know what to make of an empty tomb. Then the other disciple believes, but he and Peter go home as though nothing has happened. How extraordinary.

But the weeping Mary remains. She turns round and sees someone she thinks is the gardener. What a strange Easter story so far! And yet, isn't that what gives the story credibility? Because we are left with the distinct impression that John is describing a struggle on that first Easter morning. A great struggle of the mind and soul and a struggle to come to grips with something that defies human comprehension.



Mary struggles and we all struggle because we all are limited by what the world around teaches us to see and to know and to believe. The world teaches that death is final, that some situations are hopeless, that human beings are on their own. Someone once wrote that we live in a world in which most of our efforts are focussed on managing, knowing, ordering and controlling. These efforts can leave us hopeless and weary because they are dependent on our resources, our strategies, our interests, and our definitions - sadly, believing we are on our own.

Mary weeps, she is grieving loss. This situation seems hopeless. She believes that she is on her own. The disciples lost their courage and are in hiding, out of the eyes of the authorities both Roman and Jewish. Then Jesus speaks her name: "Mary". He is calling her beyond the limitations that the world has placed on her knowing, her believing. At that moment, Mary discovered that she was not on her own. Mary discovered, as we discover also, that there is One who is with us in death and in life. Not just anyone, but the very One who raised Jesus from the dead and who has the power to do that for you and for me as well.

Easter celebrates that good is stronger than evil.

Love triumphs over hate.

Life conquers death.

Grief and doubt give way to faith and thankfulness.

Believe then - Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed!



A song to sing or to read: Yours be the glory

Yours be the glory, risen, conquering Son
endless is the victory over death you've won.
Angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away
kept the folded grave-clothes, where Thy body lay

Refrain

Thine be the glory, risen conquering Son
endless is the victory over death you've won.

See, Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb
lovingly He greets us, scatters fear and gloom.
Let the church with gladness hymns of triumph sing
for the Lord is living, death has lost its sting. **Refrain**

No more we doubt you, glorious Prince of life
life is naught without you: aid us in our strife
make us more than conquerors through your deathless love
bring us safe through Jordan to your home above. **Refrain**



*Music in the Public Domain.
Lyrics Edmond Budry, Richard Hoyle by permission World Student Christian Federation
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Closing Prayer

May we go from this space we are in now, refreshed and eager to
share that life with others. May we go in the power of Christ's
resurrection! Alleluia!

And may God, the creator of all life, Jesus Christ, the source of eternal
life, and the Holy Spirit, the power in each and every life, bless you, this
day and every day. In Jesus' name, we pray. **Amen**

With thanks to Rev Mel Graham for preparing today's reflection



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