



Sunday 19th April 2020 Easter 2

(Revd Danny and Deacon Sally Wheadon)

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use as you are unable to attend church. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you

Opening Prayer

In places of darkness and in the fullness
of light - Christ is risen
In times of doubt and in strength of faith
Christ is risen
In our pain and in our joy - Christ is risen
The Lord is risen
He is risen indeed! Hallelujah

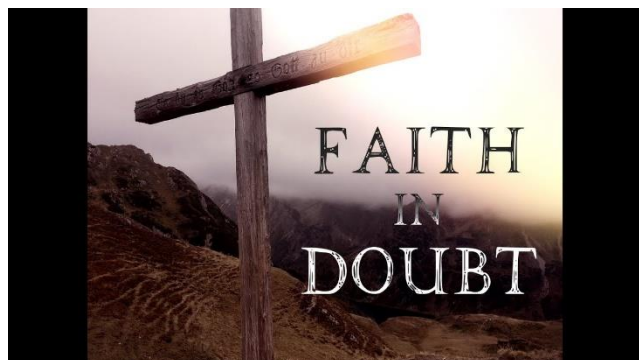
Lord I lift your name on high (StF 332)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6l6orjM3NI>

Lord, I lift your name on high,
Lord, I love to sing your praises;
I'm so glad you're in my life,
I'm so glad you came to save us.

You came from heaven to earth
to show the way,
from the earth to the cross
my debt to pay,
from the cross to the grave,
from the grave to the sky:
Lord, I lift your name on high.

Rick Founds



Let us pray together

In the chaos before anything was, Lord, you spoke
bringing life in abundance.

We praise and adore you, God of life

In the darkness of an early morning garden and the
dank coldness of death and the tomb, Lord, you
spoke bringing resurrection, defeating death and
giving us abundant life

We praise and adore you, God of Life

In the dark places of our lives, Lord, you speak and
bring recreation transformation and calling us to life
in abundance

We praise and adore you, God of Life

God of abundant life,
you have called us to be your people and to walk in
your way but there are times when we wander
away, when we close our ears to your call
and our eyes to your life.

We remember those times before you.

Take all we have been and done
and all we have left undone and transform it
through your love and grace.

Open our ears to your words of forgiveness and our
eyes to your glory.

May we hear the words
"Your sins are forgiven"

and know their truth.

Amen

Today's Reading from the Psalms: Psalm 16

Today's Gospel Reading: John 20: 24-29

Time to Reflect: Good morning everyone. This is the second Sunday of Easter, and it's a time when we normally think about Thomas. He is the disciple that is traditionally given the title 'Doubting Thomas,' a title that is usually understood as derogatory. But I prefer to think of him as someone, like so many of us, who has questions, someone who needs a bit of help in understanding things.

Shortly we will hear the National Methodist Choir of Great Britain. It consists of several hundred people who, in the wake of this pandemic, have come together to form a choir via the internet. Now I confess I wouldn't have thought this possible and I would be interested to see all the work that went on behind the scenes to make it happen. But this isn't a new thing; Eric Whitacre had the same vision about ten years ago when over 2000 people combined to create a virtual choir. He would send out the song to everyone and a video of himself conducting them. They would sing their individual parts and he would join it all together to make the most sublime choral music. It's mind-blowing when you see and hear that choir singing together, especially when you think that many of them had never seen or heard each other before. >> As I say, I find it hard to believe some of the things that can be done on the internet today to bring people together. But many people who previously might have considered themselves technophobes, are now surprising themselves as they are joining in with virtual prayer meetings, coffee mornings and the like. Recently I came across this amusing cartoon that brings today's gospel story bang up to date. >> Much as we are currently hiding behind closed doors, meeting together by Zoom, here the disciples are meeting together by Zoom after the resurrection. And although they recognise Jesus' voice, Thomas refuses to believe, unless Jesus turns on his camera and Thomas can see him for himself. But returning to the Biblical account, why was Thomas not with the other disciples when they met on that first Easter Sunday evening behind closed doors. Not just closed doors like us at the moment, but locked doors. Was he afraid? It's possible but let's not forget it was Thomas who, prior to Jesus' crucifixion, said to the other disciples – "let us also go (*with Jesus*) that we may die with him." Perhaps Thomas wasn't there because he had something better to do, or more likely he needed time alone to make sense of the events that had occurred. But whatever Thomas was doing, it meant that he missed out on the experience of the other disciples when the Lord Jesus came to them and because he hadn't seen for himself, he doubted their story. But don't we all have doubts from time to time? Surely we've all had times when we want to believe something, but in the end, our unanswered questions get the better of us. We know that Thomas was an enquirer and wasn't afraid to ask questions. Remember in John chapter 14 when Jesus says "You know the

way to the place where I am going," it was Thomas who had to courage to reply "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Often we want to believe, and we do believe, but then questions are raised, or things happen that cast doubt in our minds. I'm sure there are many right now who are finding it difficult not to doubt the existence of a loving God in the midst of all the suffering and death that we are hearing about on a daily basis. As frail human beings, doubt is natural and inevitable from time to time. But there is a difference between doubt and unbelief. Unbelief is when we simply refuse to believe. Thomas was prepared to believe under certain conditions.

But rather than condemn Thomas for his doubt, Jesus appears to the disciples again, this time when Thomas is among them. And he says directly to him "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." There is nothing to indicate that Thomas ever accepted the Lord's invitation to touch his wounds, for Thomas, seeing was enough, seeing was believing.

And I think we can find great assurance in the fact that Jesus had a personal interest in and concern for Thomas. Jesus came to Thomas in the midst of his doubt, and Jesus comes to us wanting to strengthen our faith and include us in the blessings that lie in store for those who will accept him and follow him. Doubt is a natural part of the human condition, but a point-blank refusal to accept and believe robs us of opportunities, blessings and peace. So today – Who are we? Are we doubters or unbelievers?

Will you believe in Jesus today and in the power of his resurrection? Even though you may have doubts in this unprecedented and challenging times, if you put your faith in Jesus, he will come to you just as he did to Thomas. It may be by way of a friendly neighbour, a helpful volunteer or a smiling child with a picture of a rainbow. I can't say precisely how Jesus will appear to you but rest assured, if you are truly seeking him, he will come.

Prayer:

I thank you, Jesus, that even while I do have times of doubt, I can learn to trust you to show me the path to follow, and that by following, to be blessed in ways that I too may bless others. Amen.

Despite doubts that people would be able to join together during this lockdown, we listen now to the Methodist Choir of Great Britain who were joined together via the internet last Sunday to produce this recording of the song 'In Christ Alone.'

Hymn: *In Christ alone my hope is found* (StF 351)

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oKJfs8C14yc>

- 1 In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song;
this Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
here in the love of Christ I stand.
- 2 In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,
fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
scorned by the ones He came to save:
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
the wrath of God was satisfied -
for every sin on Him was laid;
here in the death of Christ I live.
- 3 There in the ground His body lay,
light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious Day
up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory,
sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
for I am His and He is mine -
bought with the precious blood of Christ.
- 4 No guilt in life, no fear in death,
this is the power of Christ in me;
from life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
can ever pluck me from His hand;
till He returns or calls me home,
here in the power of Christ I'll stand!

Stuart Townend (1963-) and Keith Getty (1974-)
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Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

Into the closed doors of this world - come, Lord, and speak your word of peace and life

- We pray for all those who are afraid at this time.
- We pray for all those who are ill and for those who yearn for their health.
- We pray for those who are homeless and for those who struggle to feed themselves and their families.

- We pray for those who have lost their incomes or whose businesses are at risk.
- We pray for all those who offer care during this crisis often putting their lives at risk to do so.
- We pray for our government and all the governments of the world, for business leaders and all who hold any power.
- We pray for those who feel voiceless and powerless.
- We pray for those situations that no longer make the headlines for those suffering from conflicts, war and oppression, for those seeking refuge and those who have no place of safety.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: *Christ the Lord is risen today* (StF 298)

Sing/ Read /pray /proclaim the words or listen to it here

- 1 Christ the Lord is risen today; *Alleluia!*
Earth and heaven in chorus say: *Alleluia!*
Raise your joys and triumphs high; *Alleluia!*
Sing, ye heavens; and earth, reply: *Alleluia!*
- 2 Love's redeeming work is done,
Fought the fight, the battle won;
Death in vain forbids him rise
Christ has opened paradise:
- 3 Lives again our glorious king;
Where, O death, is now thy sting?
Once he died our souls to save;
Where's thy victory, boasting grave?
- 4 Soar we now where Christ has led,
Following our exalted head;
Made like him, like him we rise;
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies:

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

A prayer of blessing

May the light of the resurrection shine on your way
May the peace of the resurrection hold you fast
And may the abundant life of the resurrection fill you and empower you
And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you now and always.

Original Materials by **R A Bending**

Psalm 16 (NIVUK) **Song of Trust and Security in God**

¹ Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge. ² I say to the LORD, 'You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing.'

³ I say of the holy people who are in the land, 'They are the noble ones in whom is all my delight.' ⁴ Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more. I will not pour out libations of blood to such gods or take up their names on my lips.

⁵ LORD, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure. ⁶ The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely, I have a delightful inheritance.

⁷ I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. ⁸ I keep my eyes always on the LORD. With him at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

⁹ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure,

¹⁰ because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful^[b] one see decay.

¹¹ You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

John 20:24-29 (NIVUK) **Jesus and Thomas**

²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus^[a]), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!'

But he said to them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.'

²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.'

²⁸ Thomas said to him, 'My Lord and my God!'

²⁹ Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'

