

03-31-2024 Easter Sunday Words of Worship

Welcome –

Christ is Risen! He is risen, indeed!

Welcome to each one! It's a gift to be worshipping together on this Easter Sunday morning as we celebrate Jesus' resurrection and the good news that love has the last word over fear and hate and death. Our God is the God of life! Hallelujah! Are there **announcements** you'd like to share?

The last time some of us were together was on Thursday evening as we remembered the last supper that Jesus shared with his disciples. There he described to them the new covenant that God was making with the faithful – the covenant in his blood, the covenant in which God demonstrated Love in a way that was as BIG and SHOCKING as God had ever shown. A human being filled with so much love that he willingly accepted death because the people could not grasp this love.

On Friday we remembered Jesus' death on the cross, the darkness that came over the earth, the curtain in the temple torn in two as the heavens themselves grieved the death of Jesus of Nazareth. Joseph of Arimathea came to claim the body and lay it in a new, rock-hewn tomb. He rolled a large stone over the tomb and the women who had followed Jesus faithfully saw the tomb and how his body had been placed in it. And then they came on the first day of the week, early in the morning, (before daylight) bringing the spices that they had prepared for the body of their dearly departed... It's here that we pick up the story.

Leader: When it is still dark, we come seeking Jesus

People: The risen Christ is here among us!

Leader: The stone has been rolled away, the walls torn down.

People: The risen Christ is here among us!

Leader: The burial cloth removed, his body transformed.

People: The risen Christ is here among us!

Leader: Mary Magdalene, Simon Peter, and John see and believe.

All: We find the risen Christ among us who has made all things new! The tomb is empty, the way of Love has prevailed!

Leader: Peace be with you!

People: Peace be with you!

Let's pray. Jesus,

In your hands, the iron nails.

In your side the iron spear.

On your head a crown of thorns.

In your arid mouth the final words.

In your long-suffering the first offering.

In your slow death the first redemption.

In your sight, your watching mother.

In your nostrils the whiff of Rome.

In your ears the babbling mob.

In your mouth the sour drink.

In your dying the wind of eternity.

In your burial the promise of life.

In your resurrection the sign
we all awaited.

In your ascension the rising of
our souls. Thanks be to God!

Amen.

Morning Prayer –

We are grateful people, God. Thank you for the powerful LOVE you sent in the person of Jesus. We thank you for the victory of resurrection and for his Holy Spirit presence with us, even to this day and always. As we remember the story again, we are again awed by the mystery... so much we don't understand. But we can name what we DO understand and that is that your love for your creation is greater than any love we humans can imagine. We pray for your wisdom and guidance to help us to embody and show your love in our lives.

Meanwhile, we continue to live on this earth with our bodily aches and pains, needs and wants – and we bring those to you in our prayers. We pray for Les and Ann as you continue to hold them in the palm of your hand, God. We thank you for Bethesda and for Les' move there, for the care he's receiving and the support that offers to Ann. We pray for both of them to know your comfort and peace. We pray for Braxton and Amanda as they've been in CO this week at the Children's Hospital. We ask for your continued presence and guidance, God, for the doctors and others who care for Braxton. We pray for relief from pain for him and for sustenance for Amanda, Kelcey and Natalie as they share struggles and joy and life with Braxton. We pray for safe travels back home for Amanda and Braxton later today. God of love and healing, we pray for others we know who are struggling with health and well-being – in body, soul or spirit. In these moments of silence we bring these to you in prayer...

And we thank you, God, for healing that has happened and continues to happen. You have created us with bodies and spirits that have remarkable powers to heal from illness and injury.

We thank you for the gift of friends and family, those with whom we share the joys and struggles of this life. We pray for those who are lonely, who don't have a circle of support. Make us mindful and attentive, so that we can reach out with your love. We pray for those who don't have enough of what they need. We pray for those who live in the midst of violence or fear, for those who live in war zones – in their homes or their countries. O God, we pray for your Spirit of peace, of wholeness, of graciousness and compassion to find its way into the hearts of your people in ways that we can't keep still. Give your people courage and conviction, love that overflows and can't be quiet. Give us your resurrection hope and actions that live it out. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Introductory Words to the Lessons and Carols

We often do a service of Lessons and Carols during Advent as we tell the story of awaiting Jesus' birth. This year, Renae and the Chancel Choir have graciously prepared a similar service that tells the story of Jesus' life and ministry, his radical love that led to his passion, crucifixion and resurrection. We begin with words from the prophet Isaiah, move to the Psalms and then hear the stories of the gospel writers, including Luke in the book of Acts. You'll notice that the story – in spoken word and in song – takes us through the gamut of human emotion. We'll hear joy, amazement, grief, sorrow, and more joy. We'll hear life described as a dance and Jesus as the Lord of the Dance; many of you will recognize this song from when it came out in the early '60's. It's been said, that "It is a song to be enjoyed, as Wisdom enjoys creation. It is a song to challenge as Jesus challenged the Pharisees. But above all, it is a song to bring healing and hope to the singer in whatever the circumstances it may be sung." We trust it will do the same for the listeners. We'll move on through the story, then, with all the ups and downs that the story tells. Many thanks to Judy and Tim for being our readers this morning.

Benediction – Go in the joy and the peace of the resurrected Jesus. May we encounter his Holy Spirit in real and mysterious ways as we follow him in your lives.