

**BRIDE VALLEY TELEPHONE SERVICE FOR SUNDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2021**  
**FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

We say together the words in bold

**The Greeting**

Alleluia. Christ is risen. **He is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

Praise the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**He has given us new life and hope. He has raised Jesus from the dead.**

Alleluia. Christ is risen. **He is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

**Opening Prayer**

**Faithful one, whose word is life: come with saving power  
To free our praise, inspire our prayer and shape our lives,  
For the kingdom of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Prayers of Penitence**

Jesus Christ, risen Master and Triumphant Lord, we come to you in sorrow for our sins, and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength, and not by the power of your resurrection.

In your mercy, forgive us. **Lord hear us and help us.**

We have lived by the light of our own eyes, as faithless and not believing.

In your mercy, forgive us. **Lord hear us and help us.**

We have lived for this world alone and doubted our home in heaven.

In your mercy, forgive us. **Lord hear us and help us.**

**Absolution**

May the God of love and power forgive you and free you from your sins,  
Heal and strengthen you by his Spirit, and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**The Collect**

**Risen Christ, faithful shepherd of your Father's sheep: teach us to hear your voice and to follow your command, that all your people may be gathered into one flock, to the glory of God the Father. Amen**

**Readings**

**Acts 4.5-12**

The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, 'By what power or by what name did you do this?' Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers of the people and elders, if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. This Jesus is "the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone."

There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.'

**1 John 3.16-24**

We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

**Hymn: Great is thy faithfulness**

Great Is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;  
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;  
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

*Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!  
Morning by morning new mercies I see;  
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided,  
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

2. Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,  
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,

Join with all nature in manifold witness  
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

*Great is Thy faithfulness ...*

3. Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

*Great is Thy faithfulness ...*

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**Gospel Reading**

**John 10.11-18**

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

**Sermon**

**Be bold, be strong, for the Lord your God is with you.**

Today’s readings are challenging; In Acts Peter and John have been arrested – why? Because they healed a man on the temple steps? *Not quite*, if we look more closely at the context, the religious leaders are only interested in their motives; their questioning is **“By what power, in whose name have you done this?”**

**“In the name of Jesus”** is basically Peter’s bold reply, he is courageous because he is filled with the Holy Spirit, we are told. You can almost hear his attitude adding, who else, but the one you rejected, He still has dominion and power over darkness despite being crucified. You can sense his confidence, can’t you.

A confidence that comes from knowing the Lord deeply and carrying out his works here on earth like nothing else matters.

Then in the gospel we hear that familiar metaphor of Jesus as shepherd of the sheep. “I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.”

My own father looked after 180 cows, not a lot by today’s standards, but in those days it was quite a herd and he knew every one of them. He would sometimes ask us to go and help with milking, well with the mucking out really and I remember how well he knew the cows and how well they knew him. If I went too close to a particular cow he would say “Steady, steady” and I just knew this was a timid cow and one step too close would be dangerous, would upset her. He didn’t have much time off, but when he did and someone else milked then the milk yield would go down. The cows trusted him, they felt safe with him, they knew his voice. They were happy cows.

It reminds me of this quote by AW Tozer "The only safe place for sheep is by the side of the shepherd, because the devil does not fear sheep; he just fears the shepherd."

Love, cost and purpose is the theme running through, but often it is purpose that is the one left out . . . the sort of confidence in God we are learning about does not happen overnight. These relationships are built on trust and caring and knowing that comes from a focussed relationship, years of getting to know each other.

And this seems to be the point made in 1 John. “Let us love not in word or speech, but in truth and action” the Epistle urges. Words are the easy bit, they cost the speaker very little, the sheep will wander off, unfed and unprotected, unable to recognise the voice which has never done anything for them, the voice of a stranger. We have to live in this world, believing that Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for us, is the way of God. One flock and

one shepherd, this is what we are made for, any other way of living is out of tune with the whole purpose of the universe.

We still have the Good Shepherd, it is in the voice of the Holy Spirit, keep listening, keep close to the voice of Jesus, and that's how we'll learn to be shepherds ourselves. **Amen.**

### *Affirmation of Faith*

Let us declare our faith in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ:

**Christ has died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures; he was buried; he was raised to life on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures; afterwards he appeared to his followers, and to all the apostles: this we have received, and this we believe. Amen.**

### *Prayers of Intercession*

Risen Christ, Easter has passed and so quickly we forget the marvellous story and return to mediocrity. We forget the breath-taking message that you are risen and with us, our companion on all our journeys to Emmaus. We forget the new life available to us from that day on. Remind us daily that we are an Easter people, living by the light of the resurrection, enlivened by joy and empowered by love.

Jesus, Lord of life: **hear our prayer.**

Risen Christ, in the winter of this world's anger and sorrows, come like the spring to bring hope to the desperate nations of the world. Our news reports are full of people dying unnecessarily. We often turn away in despair. But you, O Christ, are our first glimpse of a new world where swords will be beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning-hooks. Keep our leaders hopeful and determined as they work for peace and plenty, often against huge odds. Plant Easter in their hearts.

Jesus, Lord of life: **hear our prayer.**

Risen Christ, we know many people who are living through their own Good Friday, having to face great problems, and feeling abandoned and alone under the iron grey sky. Open that sky we pray; let a shaft of Easter light pierce the gloom and illuminate at least a part of their landscape. In our hearts we name and pray for some of the people we know who are most troubled, who have most to deal with at present . . . Please also break the ice around our hearts, and make us part of the answer to our own prayers for friends and others in need.

Jesus, Lord of life: **hear our prayer.**

Risen Christ, may our church be an oasis of Easter in our community, a place of life, laughter, play and creativity. May it be a place where people let down their guard and know themselves to be gifted and valued. May it be a place where imaginations fly and hope sings. May it be a place where we do something beautiful for God each week, and then go out as Easter people to serve the community around us – because we have been raised with Christ and seek the things that are above.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

### *Lord's Prayer*

Gathering our prayers and praise into one, let us pray as our Saviour taught us:

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins**

**as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power  
and the glory are yours  
now and forever. Amen.**

### *Gloria in Excelsis*

**Glory to God in the highest and peace to his people on earth.**

**Lord God, heavenly King, Almighty God and Father, we worship you,  
we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

**Hymn: In Christ Alone**

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,  
Fulness 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!

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**Praise**

Alleluia. Christ is risen. **He is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

Praise the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**He has given us new life and hope. He has raised Jesus from the dead.**

God has claimed us as his own.

**He has brought us out of darkness. He has made us light to the world.**

Alleluia. Christ is risen. **He is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

**The Peace**

The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and said, 'Peace be with you.'  
Then were they glad when they saw the Lord. **Alleluia.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you **and also with you.**

*Sources: New Patterns for Worship. Copyright @ The Archbishops' Council 2002. Intercessions adapted from 'Breathe new life into prayer' @ John Pritchard 2018*