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EASTER SUNDAY C

17th April 2022

A short act of worship and daily devotions

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Opening prayer

Resurrection God,
Roll away the stone in my heart,
That the light of your life might stream in.

Resurrection God,
Call my name in the garden,
That I might know you are close,
That I might know that you are calling me to follow you afresh, afresh, afresh.

Resurrection is here.
The resurrection of Jesus, the story we cling to,
Is made real in the flower buds, the hatching, the birthing,
The simple butterfly.

Resurrection is here.
This day, as I worship, Lord, show me how to make the resurrection real in my own
life, and the lives of those around me.

Amen.¹

Hymn:

Matt Redman and Jonas Myrin – 10,000 Reasons – performed by the National
Methodist Choir of Great Britain - [YouTube](#)

**You may wish to say the Lord's prayer in whatever language or tradition you
are most comfortable with.**

Reading: John 20:1-18 – [Click for reading](#)

Response to the readings

In this week's passage, Mary comes face to face with the unexpected. In her grief, she goes to see the tomb where Jesus is laid, only to discover that the tomb is empty! As she turns around, what does she see but angels, which must have been quite a surprise. Finally, she comes face to face with Jesus himself, the last person she expected to see. She's so surprised she doesn't even recognise him, and mistakes him for the gardener. On this Easter morning, Mary encounters the unexpected – and her life is changed because of it. She becomes a messenger of the good news, sent away to share with the disciples that Jesus' death was not the end.

Every Easter morning, we remember Mary's encounter with the unexpected, and we too are invited to rejoice with her that Jesus' death is not the end. We can celebrate that in the unexpected, we find new life. Thanks to Jesus resurrection, what we might see as over is not always the end.

¹ Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

Our invitation to you this Easter is to ask: where might I see the unexpected around me?

You're invited to set aside an hour this week to walk around your community. So often, the people and places around us become part of the routine, the expected, perhaps even the mundane. As we pass from place to place, they even blur into the background. We can be quick to write off parts of our community as a dead end, unable to be brought back to life.

Today, you are invited to come face to face with the unexpected in your community, and look for signs of new life.

Our communities have faced a lot over the past few years. Covid has reshaped our neighbourhoods, showing us who is working hard on the frontline and where we can find friendship and support in times of need. Today, many communities are facing the consequences of rising costs of living – although lots of this is happening behind closed doors. Foodbanks are busier as families are feeling their budget squeezed, and local businesses are worrying about the months ahead. This is a time to look out for new life in the unexpected. Where can we find encouragement in resilience? Where do we see gifts and skills ready to be put to use? Where might we come face to face with Jesus, and not even notice?

How to get started...

- **Find a friend.** We recommend that you walk around your neighborhood in pairs. We're not always able to spot the unexpected by ourselves. Walking and talking with another can help us see more than we can alone. If you're with your family, why not go together? This is a good activity to do with children, who can surprise us by seeing things we've never noticed.
- **Find your starting point and ending point.** It might help to have a sense of where you want to begin and end. This might be your home, the local park, or the high street. We'd suggest that you don't plan your route too closely – be open to taking different paths, and perhaps stumbling across something new (If you'd feel safer knowing where you are, perhaps take a map with you).
- **Pray.** As you begin, ask God to open up your head, heart and sight, that you might be open to the unexpected.
- **Listen.** Let's use all of our senses here, remembering to listen out for unexpected conversations or sounds. Listen too, for your name being called. In the garden, Jesus calls Mary by her name, and it is in this moment where she recognises him. Where might Jesus be calling your name, inviting you to open yourself up to the unexpected?
- **Ask.** Where can I be good news? Mary is given the gift of good news to carry back to the community around her. What have you seen that you can carry back with you, to bring good news to the people in your neighborhood? Perhaps this is encouragement, invitation or challenge, for your church or neighbours.
- **Share.** Are there opportunities to share your reflections in your local church, perhaps in a small group or in worship? Think about who you might be able to carry your good news to.

There is so much to learn when we start right where we are, and open ourselves up to the unexpected. This Easter, may you be blessed with the surprise of Mary, and the gift of good news to carry home.

Has this sparked something new in you? Do you want to share with others who have seen the unexpected, and are seeking opportunities for new life in their local communities? Join JPIT on 11 June at From the Ground Up: Unearthing Hope and Seeking Justice. We'll be exploring how we can build power for change starting with the local. Find out more and book your place here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/244501399267>.²

Hymn:

345 STF – And can it be that I should gain? - [YouTube](#)

Blessing

I will go out into a world in need, and bring new life.
I will go out into a world of conflict and division and bring peace.
I will go out into a world of hatred and greed, and bring love.
I will go out in Jesus' name and in the power of the Spirit, be a part of his resurrection people.
Amen.³

Prayers and Prayer Pointers for the Week

Monday 18th April

- Easter Monday is typically a holiday. Hopefully that means you have some space today to draw breath, to rest, to spend time with family or friends.
- Amongst the rhythms of today, find a way to notice. To notice something you might normally have missed or overlooked. To notice a flower, or a scent, or a turn of phrase a loved one uses. Notice something today, and take a moment to allow it to make you smile.
- Thank God, in that moment, for the small things.

Tuesday 19th April

- On this day in 1775, the American Revolution began. At the time, this might not have seemed like a momentous occasion in geopolitics, but this revolution was the beginning of the creation of the United States of America – for a long time now the most powerful player on the global stage.
- Not everything about that history has been positive or helpful, just as the British Empire that the Americans fought to be free from was often a destructive, racist, exploitative power system.

² Reflection written by Hannah Brown from the Joint Public Issues Team

³ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

- Today, you are invited to think about the ways in which you are part of, or help to facilitate 'empire-thinking' (where you rule over or have power over other people and use that power for your own benefit). This might not be an easy task, but give some time to thinking about the structures of power and exploitation that you continue to prop up – perhaps with how you shop, bank, travel, or in your own work, etc.
- Spend some time praying about this and seeking wisdom for a more just world.

Wednesday 20th April

- Loving God
This Easter Season, let us celebrate the resurrection of Jesus,
The Prince of Peace.
Let us share our celebration with loved ones,
Whether our communities gather in church rooms or zoom rooms,
Let us hold onto one another on this joyous day
And sing of the wonder of your love.
Amen. (Prayer from All We Can)

Thursday 21st April

- One of the ancient monks, Cassian, advised his followers to pray the Psalm verse: 'O God, come to my assistance, O Lord, make haste to help me.'
- He believed that this simple repetition enabled him to freely choose purity in every moment of his waking life.
- Can you use this mantra, or find one that works for you, to help you recognise the sacred and seek purity in your life?

Friday 22nd April

- Holy God
As spring brings new life,
We thank you for the eternal life that you offer.
As we break bread and drink wine,
We thank you for the sacrifice of Jesus.
As we read the Easter story,
We thank you for your love.
Amen. (Prayer from All We Can)

Saturday 23rd April

- God of resurrection and new life,
We are moved by the power of your love for us.
That you would die for us,
So that we would be invited to dwell in your presence forever.
As we seek to honour the sacrifice of Jesus,
Give us wisdom and humility.
Send us out of this place,
With the joy of Easter on our tongue.
Let us worship your name,
So that all may hear.
Amen. (Prayer from All We Can)