

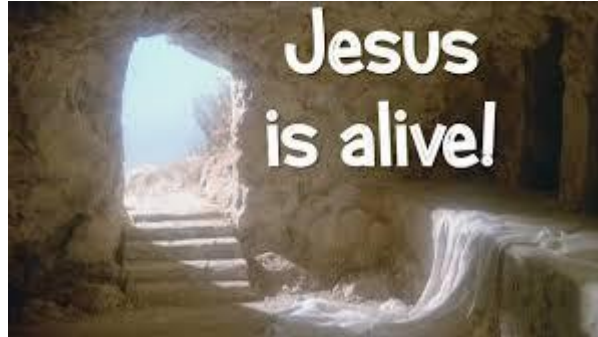
Abbey Baptist Church, Reading

Worship Service **Easter Sunday** with Communion : 10:30 A.M. 20th April 2025

Lead by Jill Bird Preacher Simon Bird

www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk

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Easter Day The day Jesus came back to life, to live forever. Truly the greatest day in history – the event that changed the world. We come to rejoice, to celebrate and to say again Jesus we believe and that it has changed us too forever.

The apostle John saw the empty tomb and believed – it changed him forever
The apostle Thomas saw the risen Jesus and believed and proclaimed ' My Lord and my God' Let's sing out our faith too in the words of this great hymn

Collection will be taken during this hymn

1. Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!
Sons of men and angels say, Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
Sing, ye heavens, and earth, reply, Alleluia!
2. Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia!
Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!
Once He died our souls to save, Alleluia!
Where thy victory, O grave? Alleluia!
3. Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!
Death in vain forbids His rise, Alleluia!
Christ hath opened paradise, Alleluia!
4. Soar we now where Christ hath led, Alleluia!
Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!
Made like Him, like Him we rise, Alleluia!
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!

Let's come into God's presence to bring our worship, our thanks and our praise with our hearts so full this Easter morning.

Christ the Lord is risen – he is risen indeed. Hallelujah

We bow before you Lord Jesus in awe of what you did for us. Between Palm Sunday and today you went through so much – you didn't stop or turn away, you suffered and died for each one of us. We are not worthy of such sacrifice, but we come in faith asking again for forgiveness and to receive your great love.

Christ the Lord is risen – he is risen indeed. Hallelujah

We wonder afresh at your resurrection. The mighty power that raised Christ from the dead, overcame death and all that satan and man could do to hold you in the grave. You say that same power is now in us who believe and we come afresh to believe and receive this morning.

Christ the Lord is risen – he is risen indeed. Hallelujah

THE RISEN CHRIST IN US THE HOPE OF GLORY BOTH NOW AND FOR EVERMORE

The Lord's Prayer: *You are invited to pray in your own heart language*

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread, and 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 for ever and ever. Amen.**

HYMN Low in the grave He lay, Jesus my Saviour!
Waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord!

Chorus

Up from the grave He arose
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes
He arose a Victor from the dark domain
And He lives forever with His saints to reign
He arose! (He arose) He arose! (He arose)
Hallelujah! Christ arose!

Vainly they watch His bed, Jesus my Saviour!
Vainly they seal the dead, Jesus my Lord!

Death cannot keep his prey, Jesus my Saviour!
He tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord!

Robert Lowery Baptist hymnal 256

First Bible Reading: John 20.1-10

Second Bible Reading 1 Corinthians 15.1-8

Sermon He saw and believed

I am sure you know the importance of foundations to a building. If they are wrong the building will not go up straight or it may collapse. Jesus told us to build our lives on the rock. If our faith is built on the truth of God's word, it will be sure and will withstand all the winds and storms of life.

Our second reading told us what was of first importance: that Jesus died for our sins, was buried and rose again (1 Cor 15:3-4). Believing that Jesus rose from the dead is the firm foundation of faith. Paul even says, if Jesus did not rise, our faith is useless (vs17). In our Gospel reading John 'saw and believed' (Jn 20:8). John wrote his Gospel so that we too may come to believe (vs31) and also continue to believe. So this morning, I want us to have the sure foundation of believing that Jesus rose from the dead. This is not just for the start of our Christian lives, but to sustain our faith, to dispel doubts, to help us answer critics and make us able to lead others into faith.

It was the greatest day in history. Jesus appeared to a succession of people. Early on that Easter morning, the women came and saw the stone was rolled away. They went away in confusion. They then summoned Peter and John to the empty tomb. John saw and believed. Then the risen Jesus appears to the weeping Mary. At the end of the day, he comes into the room to ten of the disciples, who are overjoyed. Thomas was not there and memorably says, 'unless I see the nail marks, I will not believe' (vs25). Jesus appears again one week later and goes specifically to Thomas to show him the nail marks. Thomas sees and believes. He confesses to Jesus 'My Lord and my God,'

Then Jesus said these words that give us too a part in this story, 'Because you have seen me,' he says to Thomas, 'you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed' (vs29).

We can add later evidence. Luke, the first-rate historian, records that Jesus 'gave many convincing proofs he was alive' (Acts 1:3). From our bible reading we heard that Jesus appeared to 500 at one time (1 Cor 15:6).

Jesus appeared to, not just one or two deluded people, but to a progression of many people in varied ways. You could say Jesus met them in a way that they individually could relate to. To John, quick to believe, to Mary, who is weeping and only recognises Jesus when he calls her by name, and to Thomas, who needs to see and touch Jesus. This morning, I want to concentrate on John. We read, 'Peter saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple went inside. He saw and believed.' (vs7-8).

What did he see that made him believe? It does not say this directly, but the wording strongly suggests that he saw the linen cloths, still wrapped, but around 'nothing.' If someone had pulled a dead body out, the strips would be in a mess, or be cut. No, it seems that his body just passed through the grave clothes, just like Jesus later on entered the upper room through locked doors. John saw and believed.

John was the first to believe and, unlike all the others who meet the risen Jesus, he believed without seeing the risen Jesus. He just saw that the body had gone. This links him to our situation. As Jesus said to Thomas, we believe, and are called blessed, because we believe without seeing the risen Jesus.

So, if we are expected to believe without seeing, what is the basis of our faith? Well it is these words of John's Gospel and the other accounts in the bible. Here I answer two objections.

Firstly, is the text we have what was originally written? Hasn't it changed in copying down the centuries? That is what many people, and especially Islam says. Although we don't have the original texts, we have many thousands of copies from different places, and from early times, which means that scholars can track back to and be sure of the original text.

Secondly, aren't these made up stories? Well, lawyers used to sifting through evidence have examined the Gospels. There are details here and there that do not add to the story; they even have slight inconsistencies based on different people seeing the same thing. The lawyers say they read like eye witness accounts. I suggest you read through the Gospels with this in mind. I promise, you will be surprised to find that the Gospels have a 'ring of truth.' You will also open yourself to the Holy Spirit speaking to you and convincing you of the truth.

So, have you, 'seen and believed,' this morning? You may believe quickly like John, or Jesus may meet you in your tears like Mary, or he may be patient with you as you ask questions like Thomas. But are you prepared to look at the evidence (much more than I can cover this morning) and come to your own conclusion? I hope you will, and find it is gloriously true. It really was the greatest day in history. A world changer, the greatest truth, and the greatest challenge.

Jesus rising from the dead has huge implications. It means that Jesus is exactly who he says he was. If you, 'see and believe,' you must go on and say with Thomas, 'My Lord and my God.'

I think of the first of the ten commandments, 'You shall have no other Gods but me' (Ex 20:3). Jesus is worthy of this. He calls us to abandon all other paths: spirit and ancestor worship; other religions. He calls each of us to follow and obey him. To give him every area of our lives: time, ambitions, money, relationships. We do whatever he asks us to do. This may seem uncomfortable, but he promises to empower us by the Holy Spirit, which we will look at in our preaching series up to Pentecost.

So this morning, do you have a sure foundation of believing that Jesus rose from the dead. Not just to start our Christian lives, but to sustain it, to be ready to obey for

ourselves, and be able to lead others into faith? Have you, 'seen and believed?' Will you say, 'My Lord and my God?'

So let's together speak out the truth and foundation of our faith in the resurrection.

**I believe in God our Father, I believe in Christ the Son
I believe in the Holy Spirit, Our God is three in one
I believe in the resurrection and that we too will rise again
For I believe in the Name of Jesus**

**JESUS I believe in You, I believe You rose again
I believe that Jesus Christ is Lord
For I believe in the Name of Jesus**

Communion

So we come to a special sharing of communion on this Easter Sunday. Jesus rose from the dead – he is alive for evermore. He said he would be with us always right to the very end of time. In an extra special way he is here with us on this Easter resurrection morning. He draws close in this communion time.

He told us to celebrate and remember his death and resurrection. We especially rejoice over all he did for us today and celebrate and share in the power of his risen life available for each of us afresh this morning. Come and eat, come and drink. He has promised that those who are hungry and thirsty for more of him, will never go away disappointed. Open your mouth wide and receive.

When Thomas believed he proclaimed that Jesus was his Lord and his God. Let's be still and affirm this truth in our hearts again for ourselves.

JESUS you are my LORD and my GOD

We come to remember his death, we come to celebrate his resurrection, we come to proclaim what Jesus did for us until he comes back again.

He first shared with them the bread. He had taught them that he was the very bread of life. 'I am the living bread' he said, 'If anyone eats of this bread he will never die, but live for ever. This bread is my flesh that I will give for the life of the world.'

So as we eat this bread – a symbol of Jesus' broken body, we receive afresh the life giving presence of Jesus to fill us with his love and his strength.

Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and said, 'This is my body which is for you, do this in remembrance of me.' Let's share the bread together

He then shared the cup. Jesus opened the way into God's presence through his death and resurrection. His blood represents the ultimate sacrifice of his life on our behalf. He

carried our sins for us on the cross, that we might go free of punishment. We rejoice in that forgiveness and cleansing from all sin and celebrate the transforming power of the resurrection.

Let us take the cup together – Jesus said, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me.’

Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you both receive and proclaim the power of the Lord's death and resurrection until he comes back.

Time of prayer Lam and Selina

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank You, Lord, for the opportunity to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ here at Abbey Baptist Church this Easter Sunday. The resurrection has given us true and lasting hope, and we rejoice in Christ's victory over death. Please help us to repent of our sins. We give thanks that, through Jesus, we know our sins are pardoned. **Amen.**

Lord, at this very moment, our hearts are heavy with concern for the global situation—natural disasters, wars and conflicts, and the unrest caused by world leaders. We may not fully understand why we have come to such a time, yet we trust in Your power, Your timing, Your righteousness, and Your great love for us. As in days of old, we place our trust in You alone and ask You to heal this broken world. Save us, Lord, as You have saved Your people throughout history. **Amen.**

Many in our congregation are growing older and facing various hardships. Please grant us wisdom, health, and strength, and give us the will to work together in unity for the life of our Church. Have compassion on our brothers and sisters who face difficulties settling in this land. We pray that our government, local councils, and community leaders will spend wisely and act justly to support those in need. Revive the work of charities, Lord, so they may continue to serve selflessly in Reading and throughout the U.K. **Amen.**

Lord, we know our days are numbered. Please guide us to walk the path of the Cross with courage and purpose. Bless our Church with new believers coming to faith and seeking baptism. We thank You for the gift of salvation. **Amen.**

As Your Word says in Matthew 18:20: “For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” **Now, let's form our small groups, and in the next five minutes, please take time to pray privately for one another. Amen.**

Hymn

1. 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 your body lay.

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

2. 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.

3. 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.

Budry and Hoyle Baptist hymnal 260

THE BLESSING: May we go out with the joy, the power, the hope and the certainty of the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST, our LORD and our GOD.
In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit AMEN

The Grace: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.

This week's notices Church lunch together on Easter Sunday April 20th

April 22nd 8pm zoom prayer meeting Meeting ID 862 1518 8882 Passcode Abbey
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86215188882?pwd=6ywOdujS4wePr1NaNRPKaXvuCPau98.1>

Tuesday at 10.00 and Wednesday at 12.15 bible studies restart – all welcome. Plus Thursday evening at 7.30.

April 23rd 2pm First session of START course to explore the Christian faith – invite friends