



Jesus is Lord of all the earth, he is the King of creation. Spread the good news over all the earth, Jesus has died and has risen.



This joyful Eastertide,
what need is there for grieving?
Cast all your cares aside
and be not unbelieving:

*Come, share our Easter joy
that death could not imprison,
nor any power destroy,
our Christ, who is arisen!*

No work for him is vain,
no faith in him mistaken,
for Easter makes it plain
his kingdom is not shaken:

Then put your trust in Christ,
in waking and in sleeping.
His grace on earth sufficed;
he'll never quit his keeping:

*Fred Pratt Green (1903–2000)
CCLI 215980*

Let us pray,

Lord, we praise you that not only have you created all things, but also you have made us. We praise you for the life you have given us and for the sheer joy of being alive to enjoy your world. We praise you that you made us for fellowship with you and with each other, that we might experience something of the joy and glory that we shall know when we enter the heaven of your love.

We praise you for all that you have done for us in Christ, for his life lived to the full in your love, for his death for us as a sign of your grace, for his mighty resurrection and the evidence of your power at work in him.

We praise you that his resurrection power is available to all who put their trust in him, for the power of your Holy Spirit fills the whole universe and transforms our lives and the life of your church.



Worship at Home :



Lord, we praise you that despite our weakness, our failure and the frailty of our faith, you still offer us hope and joy, and gift to us the power that makes all things new.

Fill us, we pray, with your grace, that we may praise you now and in all the days to come. Amen.



I know that my Redeemer lives —
what joy the blest assurance gives !
He lives, he lives, who once was dead ;
he lives, my everlasting Head !

He lives, to bless me with his love ;
he lives, to plead for me above ;
he lives, my hungry soul to feed ;
he lives, to help in time of need.

He lives, and grants me daily breath ;
he lives, and I shall conquer death ;
he lives, my mansion to prepare ;
he lives, to lead me safely there.

He lives, all glory to his name ;
he lives, my Saviour, still the same ;
what joy the blest assurance gives,
I know that my Redeemer lives !

*Samuel Medley (1738–1799)
CCLI 215980*

John 20:19-31

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had

met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord.’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.’ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.’ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you



Worship at Home :



believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book.

But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Acts 4:32-35

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common.

With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles'

feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

Reflection

Often on this Sunday it is very tempting to focus on Thomas – or Doubting Thomas as he came to be known. Yet I wonder if by focusing on Thomas we miss something from another part of the same story.

This year these two verses have really made me sit up and think about the familiar passages again.

John 20:25

So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.'

Acts 4:33

With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

The other disciples told their friend, 'We have seen the Lord.' In today's world we might be reticent about saying the same thing to anyone in case they thought we were totally delusional and needed medical help. Yet, at the very same time, there will



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always be an interest in what someone else believes or does.

Some of our friends will know that we go to church and leave it at that. While others may, from time to time, wonder, 'Why do you do that?' When I was in Bradford one of the church stewards came and told me that his children and their families could not understand why he wanted to be in church on Christmas and Easter Days – these were holiday days!

He, like me, thought it shouldn't be difficult to work out why, with a little thought. But clearly it disrupted the wider family's plans for those days. Yet it gave an opportunity to talk again about why church, why worship, why God was so important in their lives.

I don't know where those conversations led, but the fact that church came first must have added some weight to the parents' position.

Sometimes, the most difficult people to share our faith with can be our families and our friends – the people who know us best. Yet such was the excitement of those who had seen

the risen Jesus that they could barely wait till Thomas was through the door. They told him, 'We have seen the Lord.'

In much the same way, in Acts we are told that the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrected Jesus 'with great power'.

Testimony has become a more specialised term, but essentially, what the apostles did was tell their own stories of their encounter and knowledge that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead.

God continues to call us to share our stories: our stories about God, the stories of our lives and in particular the stories of God in our lives. There are few stories with the same amount of power as those that are true to life. Indeed, very often what interests people are the stories of other people. This is so often where we get inspiration from. Sometimes we recall the lives of saints; at other times, we look to biographies or the eulogies of those we knew well, to discover the amazing story of God in their lives. Of course, the stories we hear are only edited highlights, but they so often reflect a journey of life and faith that has lasted many years.



Worship at Home :



This Joyful Eastertide, can we start to share our journeys of life and faith? Can we see where God has gently nudged us along the way or challenged and supported us? Can we talk of God with confidence and sing 'this is my story, this is my song'?

The apostles gave their testimony, bore witness to, told their story of God – and God blessed them and those who heard it.

If truth be told, I have often been both encouraged and disheartened by the testimony of others. Encouraged because hearing testimonies convinces me and encourages me about God's activity today. Disheartened, because so many of the stories we hear are dramatic, or amazing, or life-changing, while I simply grew up in a family that went to church and believed in God, and it was all sort of normal, just part and parcel of life. Nothing dramatic to say, really. I cannot remember a time when I did not know God at some level or other. Yet, because it was part and parcel of life, it also went to the core of my being. Oh, there may well be edited highlights to tell, but the reality is

that they are just that, edited highlights. Perhaps there is something much more profound in recognising God in the ordinary and the everyday. Perhaps that is your story too.

So as we recall these amazing events of Easter, perhaps we also need to recognise that it is not just the amazing, headline-grabbing stories that are important, but our bearing witness – our telling the story of Jesus in our life – that is an essential part of the Easter story. For it is not always the extraordinary, or the amazing that needs to be heard, but the simple truth of God in the everyday.

I am grateful for those who share their testimony of any kind, but particularly thankful for those who say with honest humility, in a matter-of-fact kind of way, 'this is my story, this is my God'. It is that simple honesty that rings true and has the most profound impact on other people. Perhaps this is what is meant when the writer of Acts says, '*With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.*'



Worship at Home :



May we be encouraged to share more of our story of God. Amen.



Blessèd assurance, Jesus is mine :
O what a foretaste of glory divine !
Heir of salvation, purchase of God ;
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood :

*This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.
This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.*

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
visions of rapture burst on my sight ;
angels descending bring from above
echoes of mercy, whispers of love :

Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Saviour am happy and blest —
watching and waiting, looking above,
filled with his goodness, lost in his love :

*Frances Jane van Alstyne, (Fanny Crosby)
(1820–1915)
CCLI 215980*

Let us pray.

In the power of the resurrection we offer our prayers to God.

Remember, O Lord, in your love the Church throughout the world... those who minister to others...

May your whole Church know your power and be a sign that Christ is risen.

Lord of life, **hear us in your love.**

Remember in your love the world you have made...
those who seek a fair and proper use of the world's resources...
those who strive for justice and peace among the nations...

May the whole earth be transformed by mercy and rejoice in hope.

Lord of life, **hear us in your love.**

Remember in your love those who suffer...
the victims of violence and injustice...
and those who mourn...

May all in need find comfort, strength and freedom in the living Christ.

Lord of life, **hear us in your love.**

Remember in your love those who have died:
those who have confessed the faith and those whose faith is known to you alone.

May all your children receive grace and light according to their needs and come at last to share with all the saints in life eternal.

Lord of life, **hear us in your love.**



Worship at Home :



Gracious God, we ask these prayers through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord and Saviour who taught us when we pray to say:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass
against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.



The day of resurrection,
earth, tell it out abroad !
The passover of gladness,
the passover of God !
From death to life eternal,
from earth unto the sky,
our Christ has brought us over
with hymns of victory.

Our hearts be pure from evil,
that we may see aright
the Lord in rays eternal
of resurrection light ;
and, listening to his accents,
may hear, so calm and plain,
his own 'All hail !' and, hearing,
may raise the victor strain.

Now let the heavens be joyful,
let earth her song begin,
the round world keep high triumph,
and all that is therein ;
let all things seen and unseen
their notes of gladness blend,
for Christ the Lord is risen,
our joy that has no end.

St John of Damascus (c. 675–c. 750)
translated by John Mason Neale (1811–1866)
CCLI 215980

Blessing

God the Father,
by whose glory Christ was raised
from the dead, strengthen us to walk
with him in his risen life;
and may almighty God bless us, the
Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.



**CHRIST
IS RISEN**