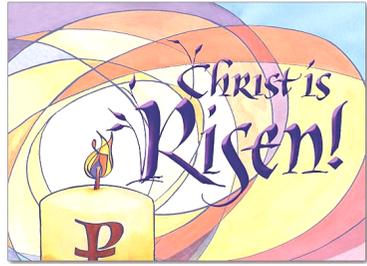


Sunday 16th April 2017

Easter Day

White or Gold



Collect

Lord of all life and power, who through the mighty resurrection of your Son overcame the old order of sin and death to make all things new in him: grant that we, being dead to sin and alive to you in Jesus Christ, may reign with him in glory; to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be praise and honour, glory and might, now and in all eternity. **Amen**

Acts 10:34-43 English Standard Version (ESV)

Gentiles Hear the Good News

³⁴ So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶ As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), ³⁷ you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹ And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

COMMENT: Peter’s sermon to the household of Cornelius, the Roman centurion in Caesarea, may seem a strange lesson to be read instead of an Old Testament selection. The thrust of Peter’s message, however, is the central theme of Easter. The resurrection of Jesus confirmed for all people (and not restricted to the Jews) and all time that Jesus is Lord, not Caesar, whom the centurion would have called by the title; Lord. The setting; the people to whom this Good News was proclaimed, and the linking of gospel and prophecy underline the universality of Peter’s message.

Matthew 28:1-10 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Resurrection

28¹ Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ² And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴ And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he^[a] lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.” ⁸ So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

Footnotes: a. Some manuscripts *the Lord*.

COMMENT: Since the narrative of the resurrection was first written in Mark’s Gospel countless people have wondered why it ended so abruptly. No one knows the answer - scholars can and do guess various answers - the fact remains we do not actually know. Writing about twenty years after Mark, Matthew obviously felt that a proper ending was needed. So he continued the story with a more appropriate completion to the narrative. It was written for a congregation that had been founded by Jews, but had already become a largely Gentile people, who had been brought to the Christian fellowship by Jewish evangelists. Here too as in Mark’s Gospel, it was women who discovered the empty tomb but did not go in. Matthew also felt that a deeper understanding of what had happened was necessary. The earthquake was real enough, as they are common in the Holy Land. The early Christian community regarded this one as a sign of a divine, eschatological event. His narrative included an angel rolling back the round stone that had locked entrance to the tomb. The angel then proceeded to give the two women an explanation and sent them to report to the disciples what they had learned. As elsewhere in Matthew’s Gospel the presence of angels represented symbolically that God was at work in what had happened. While belief in angels as actual rather than metaphorical, beings was very much the case at that time. The truth lay in regarding them as a spiritual reality perceived in a vision. The angel reassured the women that what they were seeing was not something to fear. Jesus had indeed been raised from the dead. They could go into the tomb to see the evidence for themselves. The angel then gave them instructions, they were to go at once and give an important message to the disciples. Jesus had already gone ahead of them to Galilee. They were to follow him there to see him for themselves. On the way to tell the disciples, as the women hastened away from the empty tomb, Matthew provides a meeting with the Lord, to reassure them, exactly at the point of their failure to report what they had witnessed in Mark’s Gospel. In Matthew, the women came face to face with the risen Lord and fall at his feet worshiping him. Our Lord then reinstructs them to go to the disciples. He

reiterated what he angel had told them not to be afraid and to do as they had been bidden. A later Gospel writer; John, follows Matthew's narrative, but singles out Mary Magdalene. It is Matthew and John's accounts that fix in our minds that Mary Magdalene was the first to see the Risen Lord, whilst in the more primitive account in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, it is Peter who is the first to see the Risen Lord. Luke's Gospel backs this up. Whilst Paul has a definite order of appearances, his account could be reconciled with Matthew and John's account (to some degree) as the risen Lord could have met Peter first (who was in Jerusalem) then the two Mary's.

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 *Confitemini Domino* Grail Psalter

℟ This day was made by the Lord; we rejoice and are glad.

Alleluia!

¹ Give thanks to the Lord for he is good,
for his love endures for ever.

² Let the sons of Israel say:

“His love endures for ever.” ℟

¹⁴ The Lord is my strength and my song;
he was my saviour.

¹⁵ There are shouts of joy and victory
in the tents of the just. ℟

The Lord's right hand has triumphed;

¹⁶ his right hand raised me.

The Lord's right hand has triumphed;

¹⁷ I shall not die, I shall live

and recount his deeds.

¹⁸ I was punished, I was punished by the Lord,
but not doomed to die. ℟

¹⁹ Open to me the gates of holiness:

I will enter and give thanks.

²⁰ This is the Lord's own gate

where the just may enter.

²¹ I will thank you for you have answered
and you are my saviour. ℟

²² The stone which the builders rejected
has become the corner stone.

²³ This is the work of the Lord,
a marvel in our eyes.

²⁴ This day was made by the Lord;
we rejoice and are glad. ℟

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,**

**As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.**

COMMENT: This song of victory may have been composed to celebrate some unknown military triumph. It has been suggested that it referred to the lifting of the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib of Assyria in 701 BC during the reign of Hezekiah. (2 Kings 18-19) Vss. 17-18 any also refer to Hezekiah's illness as told in 2 Kings 20. In later Jewish rituals it served as a special litany on festive occasions. According to the Mishnah, this psalm was especially appropriate for Succoth, the harvest thanksgiving festival. Verses 19-24 are a prayer for the temple. The psalm ends with a striking benediction reiterating the praise of vs. 1. All these prior uses make it appropriate as a hymn of Easter thanksgiving. Obviously the apostolic church found in it plenty to remind them of the joy they felt on realising that Christ had indeed been raised from the dead. Martin Luther, the great German Reformer of the 16th century, said it had frequently helped him out of grave distress.

Short Preface

But chiefly are we bound to praise you because you raised him gloriously from the dead. For he is the true paschal lamb who was offered for us, and has taken away the sin of the world. By his death he has destroyed death, and by his rising to life again he has restored to us everlasting life.

Post Communion

God of Life, who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross, and by his glorious resurrection have delivered us from the power of our enemy: grant us so to die daily to sin, that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his risen life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Blessing

The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the eternal covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Solemn Blessing

God the Father, by whose love Christ was raised from the dead, open to you who believe the gates of everlasting life. **Amen.**

God the Son, who in bursting from the grave has won a glorious victory, give you joy as you share the Easter faith. **Amen.**

God the Holy Spirit, who filled the disciples with the life of the risen Lord, empower you and fill you with Christ's peace. **Amen.**

And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**