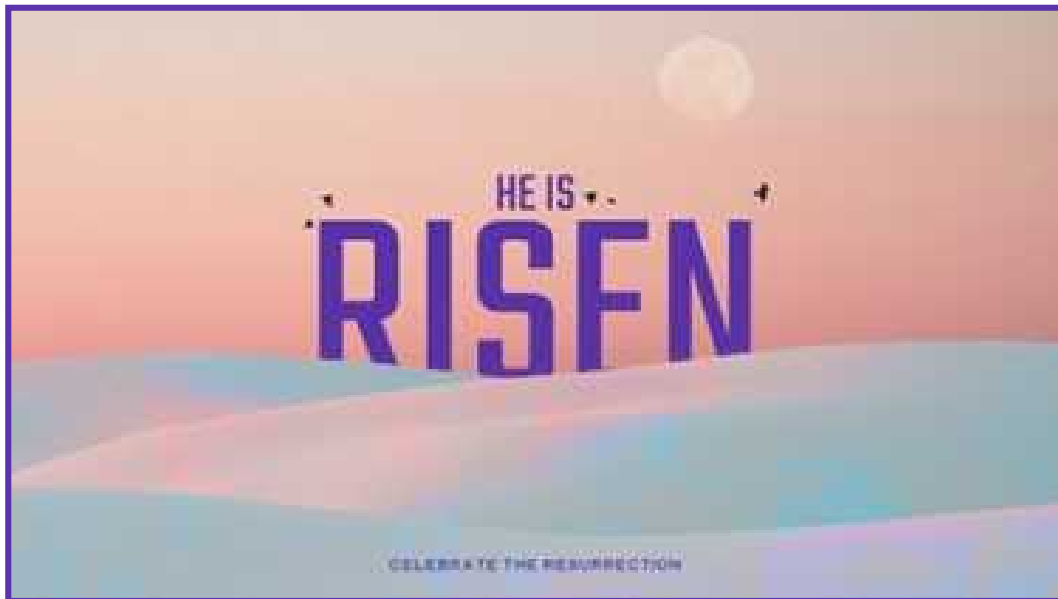




Easter Meditations

2024



Our faith belongs to history. This means that our beliefs are made and shaped through certain historical events and words recorded in the Bible. Of these, none is more significant than the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Easter gives us the special opportunity to meditate on these events and think again, with deep thanksgiving, of all that they mean to us. We rejoice that in them our guilt is washed away and death defeated.

This year we will follow the story as it is told in Luke's Gospel.

1. '...not my will but yours be done' (22:42)

When we think of all that Jesus suffered for us, it was not only the pain of the cross. He was betrayed by a friend. His disciples deserted him. The authorities were unjust. And here we are reminded that he did not want any of this to happen. He prayed that it would not. And then he put his own desires into the hands of God and prayed that God's will would be done, though this meant the cross. Through his obedience, the world was saved.

Response:

Father Almighty, with all my heart I thank you for the Lord Jesus, who chose above all to do your will and through his love and obedience to bring salvation into our lost world. Amen

2. 'And the Lord turned and looked at Peter' (22:61)

Peter did not betray Jesus, but he did deny knowing him out of fear. Then he saw the eyes of Jesus upon him in the moment of his denial. We know that he wept bitterly. Would we have done better than Peter? Do we deny knowing Jesus though fear when we should speak up? After the death and resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit, Peter was a forgiven man and a new man. Filled with courage, he told the world the truth of the gospel.

Response:

Father of all mercies, please forgive my sins and my failures to follow Jesus as I should. Please help me to have the faith and courage to tell the truth about Jesus in my world. Amen.

3. 'Today you will be with me in Paradise' (23:43)

Jesus mixed willingly with the no-hopers, the tax-collectors and sinners. But here at the cross he meets the supreme no-hoper, the thief dying beside him for crimes which he freely admitted. And he turns to Jesus and asks for forgiveness, he asks to be remembered in the kingdom. In his reply, Jesus speaks to all no-hopers, that is to you and to me, 'Today you will be with me in Paradise'. With these words, Jesus shows us that our salvation in the world to come will depend on his death, not our works, and that when we turn to him, our hope is utterly secure.

Response: Heavenly Father, please fill my heart and soul with assurance that your love and mercy through Jesus will bring me home to be with you. Amen

4. 'Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James' (24:10)

Women were not trusted witnesses in the ancient legal system. But God trusted them to be the first witnesses to the empty tomb. The apostles, however, do not immediately grasp its significance. Where was the body of Jesus? Was he raised, or was the body stolen? Thus Peter wondered, as he did not yet believe. But the women did, because the angel reminded them of what Jesus himself had said, and they remembered and trusted Jesus.

Response:

Gracious Lord, I thank you that my Saviour the Lord Jesus did not stay in the grip of death, but rose from the grave, thus giving us hope too that we will be raised and see him face to face. Amen

5. 'And their eyes were opened and they recognised him' (24:31)

There were two on the road to Emmaus – perhaps husband and wife - and they met a stranger who taught them and then ate with them and when he blessed and broke the bread, they knew him. Up to then their eyes were kept from recognising him. But now we see that it is more than the tomb being empty. Jesus has been raised from death and is now in his resurrection body. They bore witness to the Apostles, who were already alive with the excitement which goes on to all eternity, 'The Lord has risen indeed!'

Response:

Almighty God, you raised Jesus from the dead and declare that death is defeated, I praise and thank you with all my heart for what you have done and share the joy of the disciples that Christ is risen indeed. Amen

6. 'they still disbelieved for joy' (24:41)

Jesus is not a ghost, not an apparition. He shows them his wounds and takes and eats fish. This is so real, the disciples can hardly believe it. And yet, they were so absolutely convinced that in due course a number of them died for him. Their joy was in seeing their beloved Teacher again. But we share their joy for in the death of Jesus to take away our sins and the resurrection of Jesus, we see our own hope, our own future, our own blessedness. For death is not the last word. Jesus has the last word and he declares those who trust him, 'forgiven!'

Response:

Dear God, as we hear the word of forgiveness and know that it is based on the truth of what you did through Jesus, not some myth, I give you thanks and praise and ask that my faith in him may grow and that I will be more and more like him until I go to be with him. Amen

7. 'Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures' (24:45)

The risen Jesus calls upon his apostles to witness what they had seen to all nations. He promises to empower them with the Holy Spirit. But first he shows them from God's word that his life, death and resurrection had been foretold. It had always been God's plan that these things should happen and that 'repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations'. Because of their witness, we have believed, and we too must tell the world the great news which we have embraced: 'Jesus Christ is risen!'

Response:

Gracious Lord, please grant that as I read the sacred scriptures, you will open my eyes to their truth and help me to believe it and obey it. Help me each day to walk with Jesus as my Lord and Saviour and to show forth his life in my words and deeds. Amen.

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