

# HOLY WEEK



## Scripture Readings

Psalm 16 (antiphon v. 10)

Isaiah 25:6-9

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Mark 16:1-8

## Hymns

*Hymn of the Day* – 458

*Other Hymns* – 475 (OT), 461 (E),

463 (G), 466 (G), 474 (G), 457

## Collect of the Day

Almighty God the Father, through Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, You have overcome death and opened the gate of everlasting life to us. Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of our Lord's resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by Your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

or

O God, for our redemption You gave Your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross and by His glorious resurrection delivered us from the power of the enemy. Grant that all our sin may be drowned through daily repentance and that day by day we may arise to live before You in righteousness and purity forever; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## Prayers

Let us pray for the whole church of God in Christ Jesus which lives in the perpetual joy of His resurrection, and for all people, that they might come to also share in those eternal joys.

O Lord of life and death, as in the fullness of time You did send forth Your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to bear the guilt and the punishment of all our sins and the sins of the whole world on the tree of the cross, and on the third day did raise Him from the dead for our justification and eternal salvation, so receive our humble thanks and joyous praise that we bring before You this holy day: Lord, in Your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

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O Lord of life and death, bestow upon Your Church throughout the world the power and guidance of Your Holy Spirit so that it may boldly proclaim and confess the resurrection of Your Son from the grave. And grant that we and all who hear the Easter message of His empty tomb may turn from sin, trust in Him alone, worship Him with reverence and awe, and so receive forgiveness and eternal life: Lord, in Your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

O Lord of life and death, Ruler of all, bless the nations of the world with justice and peace. In every land curb the evil of corruption and self-interest and violence. Provide leaders who govern wisely and justly. When times are prosperous, may our hearts be thankful, and in troubled times do not let our trust in You fail: Lord, in Your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

O Lord of life and death, visit the homes in which Your people dwell. Grant that husbands and wives, parents and children may live together in peace under Your protection and so come to share eternally in the blessings of Easter: Lord, in Your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

O Lord of life and death, in Your beloved Son You bring hope and life where there is only despair and death. Heal and strengthen those who are sick and hospitalised. Bless the medical treatments that they are receiving. And comfort all who weep for loved ones now fallen asleep with the Easter message that because He lives, we shall live also: Lord, in Your mercy; **hear our prayer.**

O Lord of life and death, these things and whatever else You would have us ask, we implore You to grant for the sake of our risen Lord Jesus Christ, who this day abolished death and the grave and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel; and who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**



# HOLY WEEK SERMON

THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD / EASTER DAY

(Series B)

MARCH 31, 2024

**Sermon Text: Mark 16:1-8**

*“The Tale Of The Spice Girls”*

In the name of our risen Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

“When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint (the body of Jesus).” So the evangelist St. Mark begins his Easter Gospel. And now, let us hear ‘The Tale of the Spice Girls.’

‘By Sunday morning, we were really upset. We had seen the Lord Jesus die . . . there, on the cross, outside of Jerusalem, on Friday. We hoped that perhaps He would somehow be saved before it came to that . . . but no. We were there when He breathed His last and died. Two men – Joseph and Nicodemus, who loved Him and who were His disciples, but secretly out of fear of the Jews – took His body down from the cross. His other disciples? Well, they had run away and were in hiding when this whole terrible thing began to unfold. Joseph, a rich man from Arimathea, had the lifeless body of Jesus placed in his own family tomb. That was so kind of him.

‘Because the Sabbath of the Passover was almost at hand, they buried the Lord quickly . . . wrapping His bloodied, lifeless body in a fine linen cloth, and laying Him out on a stone shelf inside the sepulchre. There was no time to include the spices: frankincense, myrrh, aloes, and other sweet-smelling ointments that we use to anoint the body at burial. And besides, well, you know, there are proper ways to anoint a dead body . . . and Joseph and Nicodemus were out of their element. We observed the site where Jesus lay, and went home to prepare those spices in order to do it properly. We hurried to the Jerusalem bazaar to buy what we needed from the local merchants before they closed up shop for the day of rest. Our hearts were so heavy and sad . . . not restful at all, but filled with much grief and pain.

‘On the third day, Sunday, we gathered the spices for embalming . . . starting very early in the morning, even before the sun rose. We wanted to make sure we had time to do things just right, our last act of love and devotion to our Lord.

‘But as we walked along the way, the question arose among us as to how we would even get into the tomb to do this – a huge stone door, after all, had been rolled against the entrance to the tomb and sealed it shut. At least two men were needed to roll that massive stone into the groove that was chiselled into the surrounding rock to close it tight. Would someone be there so early on the first day of the week to let us in? We hadn’t thought of that. The stone was far too heavy for us to move.

‘We were so sad. Embalming the body of the Lord, opening the door to His tomb—these sad duties had become a part of our lives because of sin. Death, after all, was in the world because of sin. Now, we must face it again. We had hoped that the Lord Jesus would free us from all this – from sin’s curse, from death, from the grave. Yet, here we are again. Easter morning, and we are going to the cemetery, preparing to give Jesus a proper burial. How sad!

‘But boy, were we surprised—shocked, really—when we arrived at the tomb. That massive stone had been rolled back! The door was open! Why shouldn’t we go in? We just walked right in. But where was the body of Jesus? It was gone! We were alarmed . . . confused and quite afraid, actually. Moreover, we were not alone! A young man in a white robe was sitting there in the tomb. He could tell we were upset, so he said, “Do not be alarmed.” His voice was different from any voice we had ever heard – like it came from out of this world, like the voice of an angel. “You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified,” he said. “He has risen; He is not here. See the place where they laid Him” – pointing to the empty burial bed, the white linen shroud all neatly folded up. We gazed around the tomb starstruck. Sure enough, the tomb was empty, except for this heavenly messenger. He then told us to leave the tomb and to go and tell this news to the disciples; and that we would see the risen Lord Jesus again in Galilee.

‘Let me assure you, the angel didn’t have to tell us twice. We tore out of there like a flash. The shock of the empty tomb of Jesus was the last thing we thought we would see when we went out to anoint His body. We didn’t say a word to each other or to anyone on the way back to Jerusalem . . . nothing, for we were all filled with trembling and astonishment, fear and amazement.

‘Not until later. Then, we began to think back on that morning. We remembered the words of Jesus. We believed what He said. As for the spices we bought—we didn’t need them; for Jesus is alive. We saw Him. We touched Him. We talked with Him. Because He lives, He promises that all who believe in Him and are baptised into Him will also rise from the grave to live again. Not just us, who were there that first Easter—but everyone who is in Christ Jesus has new life from Him. Jesus is alive! His resurrection proves that when He died on the cross and He took our sins away. In Him we are forgiven. Best of all, Easter is God’s gift of life after this life. We don’t need to be afraid, even of dying; for Jesus has defeated death and the grave. In Him, we have eternal life in heaven.

So ends the Easter morning ‘Tale of the Spice Girls.’ Now, make no mistake. This is no mere idle tale told to us by these women, as even the disciples themselves first thought. No, the resurrection of Jesus is a fact – sure and certain. The living Jesus changes everything for us. How we live . . . and, yes, how we die. So the writer of Hebrews thus declares to us this Easter Day – taking a cue, as it were, from those Spice Girls: “Let us be grateful for we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.” After all, ‘Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!’ Amen.