

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

We've heard Luke's account of 3 women who discovered the empty tomb, and first heard that joyful acclamation: '*He is not here, but has risen*'.

Poem by Suzy Brouard ('Let justice roll down' p227)

How are you this Easter morning? Like those men? Dull, indifferent, nothing has changed? or like those women? A tingle down your spine, a light in your eyes, joy in your heart?

All three of those women were at the cross, watched Jesus die, and the earth covered in darkness, but now the sun had risen, the light was shining brightly. **A! Christ is risen!**

Mary Magdalene: whose life was dramatically changed and healed by Jesus; devoted to Jesus, first to meet the risen Jesus. Yet here was something far greater than the healing of her body and mind. **A! Christ is risen!**

Joanna: rich, her husband a steward in the house of King Herod, she lived in a royal palace, and provided for Jesus needs from her wealth. Yet here was something far greater than money, position, privilege, status could ever buy. **A! Christ is risen!**

Mary: wife of Cleopas, sister-in-law to Joseph + Mary, Jesus' aunt, mother of the apostle James. Yet here was something far greater than family ties, + the love of family. **A! Christ**

When Jesus rose from the dead these women were changed, + the whole world changed forever! This was a pivotal point in history. Because of Easter there will always be **HOPE**.

Hope for all who are going through hard times, for rich and poor alike, for all weighed down by guilt and sin, for all who live in fear of death, for a broken world, and broken lives.

So, four things from the letters of **H.O.P.E.**

H is for H! Christ is risen! Easter is a time of joy and rejoicing. Those women's tears on Good Friday were turned into joy on Easter morning. It is right to celebrate, to be thankful, to praise God together, as we remember all that Jesus' resurrection means for us.

O is for Open. The **tomb** that held Christ's body was **open** on that first Easter morning, the stone was rolled away, Christ was no longer there, but had risen. The curtain in the Temple was torn in two and the **way of forgiveness** was now **open** for all to come to God. Because Christ died and rose again, the way to heaven, to **life eternal**, the way into the presence of the Father was now **open**. Because of Easter we can come to God at any time, in any place, and know that he is with us and hears us.

P is for Power. The **power of God** shook the earth on Good Friday, and on Easter Day, like a mighty explosion, the ripples of **God's power** spread through the whole world, as Christ broke the grip of death, and rose again.

But notice the **nature of God's power**, and how it was released into our world.

As we think back over the events of this Holy Week, we see Jesus entering Jerusalem in **humility** riding on a donkey; and we read at the Last Supper, '*Jesus knew that the Father had given him **complete power**, so he rose from the table, tied a towel round his waist, poured some water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet*'. The humble action of a servant. We then see the **anguish** of unanswered prayer in Gethsemane, and the **agony** of suffering on the cross, Jesus giving himself up for others. This is how **God's power** came to be unleashed upon the world. If we would know **God's power**, we must also walk the way of humility, denying ourselves, taking up our cross and following Jesus.

E is for Everyone. The Good News is for **all**, for all of us here today, for all the people of the world. '*For God so loved the world, that he sent his only Son.*' Christ came for all.

Later, it wasn't only those women whose eyes and lives were lit up by the risen Jesus, but the men too! And millions since then. Christ longs for **our** response of love to his love.

Then we, like those first disciples, are sent out to proclaim the good news that Jesus Christ is risen! to show the difference he makes in our lives, to live as people of **Hope**.

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