

5th April 2026 – Easter Sunday

Jeremiah 31:1-6

Acts 10:34-43

Matthew 28:1-10

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Six months before Jesus was born, there was another special birth. Luke tells the story of Jesus' cousin: John, who would be called the Baptist. In some ways his birth was just as dramatic as Jesus' birth: a miracle, announced by angels. Part of the drama is that John's father, a priest named Zechariah, gets struck dumb by an angel; and it's only when Zechariah shows his obedience to God, that he is able to speak again.

You're probably wondering what all of this has to do with Easter. Well, once Zechariah gets his voice back, his first words are a song of praise to God [Luke 1:68-79]. Our tradition calls that song the Benedictus; many Christians say it every day at morning prayer. And although it comes from a time before Jesus was born, it works very well as an Easter hymn too:

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,
for he has come to his people and set them free.
He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour,
born of the house of his servant David.
Through his holy prophets God promised of old
to save us from our enemies, from the hands of all who hate us,
To show mercy to our ancestors
and to remember his holy covenant.
This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham:
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
Free to worship him without fear,
holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life.
And you child shall be called the prophet of the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
To give his people knowledge of salvation
by the forgiveness of all their sins.
In the tender compassion of our God

the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

We are living in darkness and in the shadow of death. There is no shortage of evidence to point to. Some of our experience of death is personal: the loss of loved ones; chronic illness; addiction; failure. Some of our experience is on the larger scale: war; exploitation; climate change... Some of our experience points to a cosmic struggle against darkness and evil. All of this is evidence of death: physical death, moral death, spiritual death. And our lives are overshadowed by it.

As creation walks together through this barren valley, God comes to us and sets us free. He sets us free from fear and the power of sin and the power of death and the power of our Enemy; but he also sets us free for something more positive: freedom to worship him; freedom to become children of God.

Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, has been raised up for us – a mighty Saviour. He was raised up for us on the Cross that he might draw the whole world to himself; and he was raised up for us on the third day, to break the power of sin and death, and to create in himself a new and living way to the Father. We are drawn to him that we might become like him in his risen life – holy and righteous.

This is the day that the Lord has made. Jesus Christ is the compassion of our God, the dayspring from on high. He shines on us this Easter Day, and he will shine in us forever.

Alleluia, Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!