



EASTER SERVICE 2021

Not Your Typical Love Story

Today we celebrate – today Jesus is embraced and accepted by God. He is raised up by life giving love of God.

Today we see that death does not have the last word, love does.

The word LOVE in English refers to a wide range of feelings and actions, all of which, except perhaps for the Tennis score – originate in God.

Easter is not your typical love story because it focuses on the following definition: **The benevolent affection of God for His creatures or the reverent affection due from them to God**

Mark 12:29-31 “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might – this is from Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and was quoted by Jesus as read in Mark’s gospel.”

John 3:16 “God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son. Anyone who believes in Him will not die but will have eternal life.”

John 15:12-14 “Jesus said – Here is my command. Love each other, just as I have loved you. No-one has greater love than the one who gives his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.”

But we see from Love in the Easter story that God’s Love is costly – it is not sentimental.

Jesus was rejected, betrayed – He had nothing to gain but everything to lose by way of love.

Yet His costly love leads Him to death. And yesterday, we considered Holy Saturday – a day when there was silence in heaven and in the tomb. When Jesus was buried by human rejection and the weight of His love.

The theme of love has been a recurrent one in the history of literature. Love is an interesting subject because love, unlike other themes, has many twists and turns and many different endings.

Love is unique in that it is a constant; while it goes on through different decades and different centuries, the elements stay the same.

The ultimate symbolic example of the story of young and doomed love was Romeo and Juliet

Emily Bronte wrote Wuthering Heights – the love story of Heathcliff and Catherine expresses the idea of giving oneself unreservedly to another

Anna Karenina in Tolstoy explores the duality between the love for family and romantic love.

You can't have your television or radio on for very long without hearing or seeing something about love.

Mills and Boon is one of the world's most successful publishers of romantic novels.

Easter is not a romance story contrived by a human writer.

It is history, written in human lives by God.

It tells us how much God loved the world.

Jesus had predicted all that had happened to Him. We can read this in Luke 9:22

“And He said – The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and He must be killed and on the 3rd day be raised to life.”

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the central fact of Christian history. On it, the church was built, without it, there would be no Christian church today.

When Jesus was on the cross He could have called in an army of angels to save Him but He allowed Himself to be held to the cross by His love for us.

He didn't give up on us.

And we may struggle to comprehend such a love because we've nothing to measure it by or compare it to.

Nobody has ever loved us like Jesus and nobody ever will.

We struggle to understand how a Father could sacrifice His Son – yet we are viewing this from our human understanding, a human father. This was not the case because in the beginning there is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit – the Trinity who made their plans for human beings.

Jesus' resurrection is unique. Other religions have strong ethical systems, concepts about paradise and the afterlife, and various Holy Scriptures.

Only Christianity has a God who became human, literally died for His people, and was raised again in power and glory to rule His people forever.

You may wonder – so why is the resurrection so important?

1. Because Christ was raised from the dead, we know that the Kingdom of Heaven has broken into earth's history. Our world is now headed for redemption – not disaster.
2. Because of the resurrection, we know that death has been conquered and we too will be raised from the dead to live forever with Christ.
3. The Resurrection gives authority to the church's witness in the world. The Apostles most important message was the proclamation that Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead.
4. The Resurrection gives meaning to the church's sacrament of the Lord's Supper. We break bread with our risen Lord who comes in power to save us
5. The Resurrection helps us find meaning even in great tragedy – it gives us hope for the future
6. The Resurrection assures us that Christ is alive and ruling His Kingdom. He is not a legend – He is alive and well
7. God's power that brought Jesus back from the dead is available to us so that we can live for Him in an evil world.

What unites all Christians is this fact – Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

People who hear about the Resurrection for the first time may need time before they can comprehend this amazing story. Like the disciples, they may pass through 4 stages of belief.

1. It's a fairy tale – impossible to believe.
2. Then like Peter they may check out the facts but still be puzzled about what happened.
3. Only when they encounter Jesus personally will they be able to accept the fact of the Resurrection.
4. Finally, as they commit themselves to Jesus and devote their lives to serving Him, they will begin fully to understand the reality of His presence with them.

Easter tells us that Christ's death and resurrection was the price required to redeem each of us – a price only Jesus could pay.

Let's not fool ourselves – we are all sinners – we all fall short of the Glory of God. We may not have killed anyone – but telling a lie has the same sentence – only Jesus' sacrifice can wash us whiter than snow.

This is what we need to stop and think about each time we're tempted to sin and disobey God.

EASTER SHOWS US THAT ALL WE REALLY NEED IS GOD'S LOVE IN JESUS.

Our Father in Heaven, hallowed by Your Name.

On the cross, while He was dying, Jesus called out to His Father in Heaven. We too can call out to Him any time; when we are feeling pain or feeling joy.

Because God loves us.

Your Kingdom come.

When he was dying on the cross, Jesus told one of the thieves being punished with Him – today you will be with me in paradise.

He gives us the same promise that His kingdom comes to us and we come into His kingdom

Because God loves us.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

God wants us all to live with Him forever. Jesus' death and resurrection was the way He chose to have that happen.

We now can choose to believe it and to obey Him here on earth

Because God loves us.

Give us today our daily bread.

God gives us everything we need. That includes family and friends to love us.

Because God loves us.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us

Because God loves us.

Peter tells us that all who believe in Jesus – His love and power, His death and life, have their sins forgiven through His name.

Do not bring us to the test, but deliver us from evil.

Our pains are a sign of the evil in our lives and our world. Jesus, through His death and life has delivered us from all evil.

Because God loves us.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever.

Amen.