

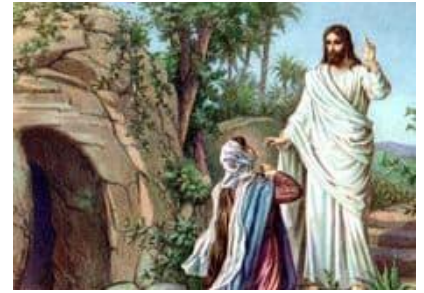


The Central Norfolk Methodist Circuit

Sunday 12th April 2026

Theme

Prepared by Glyn Constantine – Local Preacher



Opening prayer:

Lord, I come into your presence, I bring everything I have experienced this past week - the things I'm proud of, and the things I wish had been different.

I bring the people that enriched my week, and the people I found it hard to share my week with.

I bring the moments of joy, peace, pride, sorrow, frustration, regret and pain

I bring my hopes for next week.

I lay all of these things at your feet, and rest in your loving presence.

Hymn 293 All heaven declares <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLAOYZHuV6U>

All heaven declares,
The glory of the risen Lord.
Who can compare
With the beauty of the Lord?
Forever He will be
The Lamb upon the throne.
I gladly bow the knee
And worship Him alone.

I will proclaim
The glory of the risen Lord,
Who once was slain
To reconcile man to God.
Forever You will be
The Lamb upon the throne.
I gladly bow the knee
And worship You alone.

Opening Prayers

Unshakeable God, let us come together and praise you for your great mercy. When death appeared to have won and our hope was sealed away, your love and power shone through the emptiness of our hearts as your promises were fulfilled. We were not, and will not be, abandoned in the grave. Fear is transformed into faith as you never leave us alone in the darkness. Calling witnesses to Jesus' resurrection as the stone was rolled away, their pain and suffering faded as you revealed the risen Christ. You conquered death, and because you live, we too live in hope. Though we may face many trials and heartbreaks in this life, we ask you to speak your peace into our anxious hearts. In your presence there is unbreakable joy, as your heart is shown so clearly for us and with us. Our faith may be tested, but you never leave us.

When Jesus was on the cross, you were there, shedding and sharing tears in his suffering, as you do for us. Our pain is yours, and our love too is your love. Blessed are those who are not yet with you; let them come to know you and to feel the peace we feel each day and, in every walk, we take in this life with you by our side. When the world may seem as though the lights have gone out and cruelty still exists in the sins of the world, let all see your faith and hope shine through in the work of your disciples. You are the source of our living hope and the foundation of all our joy. Lord Jesus, deepen our trust and unwavering faith in you as we boldly proclaim your name. Oh Lord, our God, we pray to you, Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn 309 See, what a morning, gloriously bright, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ET65Y1r3YeQ>

See, what a morning, gloriously bright
With the dawning of hope in Jerusalem
Folded the grave clothes, tomb filled with light
As the Angels announce, "Christ is risen"
See God's salvation plan
Wrought in love, borne in pain, paid in sacrifice
Fulfilled in Christ, the Man
For He lives, Christ is risen from the dead

See Mary weeping, "Where is He laid?"
As in sorrow she turns from the empty tomb
Hears a voice speaking, calling her name
"It's the Master, the Lord, raised to life again"
The voice that spans the years
Speaking life, stirring hope, bringing peace to us
Will sound till He appears
For He lives, Christ is risen from the dead

One with the Father, Ancient of Days
Through the Spirit who clothes faith with certainty
Honor and blessing, glory and praise
To the King crowned with power and authority
And we are raised with Him
Death is dead, love has won, Christ has conquered
And we shall reign with Him
For He lives, Christ is risen from the dead

Reading: John 20: 19-31

Reflection:

I wonder if you can remember your friends from 50 years ago and the times you spent together? Every year when we come to the resurrection appearances I think of Thomas, and in particular why John remembers what he said and did so well so many years later when the disciples had gone their separate ways. Were they close friends, was it that he stood out from the other disciples?

Thomas only appears as a name in a list in the synoptic gospels but John mentions his words or actions on three specific occasions as well as that he was present when Jesus shared breakfast with some of the disciples by the sea of Galilee. Take a look at John 11 v 16, John 14 v 5-6 and of course today's reading John 20 v 24-29.

Thomas gets a bad press, and his nickname, based on the time when the other disciples saw the risen Jesus in the upper room, but he wasn't there. Was that because he had more courage and was out getting food whilst the others were frightened to go out? Either way he wanted to experience the risen Christ for himself. He couldn't believe something so miraculous on the experience of others.

In John 11 he again shows courage. When the other disciples tried to dissuade Jesus from returning to Bethany in case he was killed, Thomas was the one who said to the rest that they should follow Jesus and be prepared to die with him.

In John 14, Jesus tells the disciples that he is the way, the truth and the life and that he leaving to prepare a place for them and that they know the way to where He is going. I can imagine the scene, rather like in a class or lecture. No one knows what the teacher means but everyone thinks the others do and is afraid to ask and risk looking stupid. Once again Thomas has the courage and honesty to ask.

To me Thomas comes across as a good, brave, honest person whose feet were firmly on the ground and who needed evidence of something as astounding as the resurrection of Jesus. I can empathise with his humanity more than the others. Perhaps its that which allows us to identify with him and why John included him for us.

In John 20 we are told that the whole purpose of John's gospel was to put over the good news in a way that people might believe. We aren't to worry that we haven't had the experience of those men in the upper room or Thomas. Jesus says that we are blessed even though we have not seen and yet have believed.

Each of us needs to look afresh at the evidence for the resurrection and be able to say as Thomas did "My Lord and my God"

Prayer of Intercession and Petition

Heavenly Father, I pray for all who have, and still are, suffering because of injustice, especially those who are persecuted because of their faith in Jesus. I bring before you all the innocent people whose lives have been ruined by acts of aggression, intimidation, oppression and warfare. I think of people who act as mediators between conflicting parties, seeking to promote peace. I pray for all who are grieving at this time. There seem to be tragedies reported every day, as well as natural deaths. I pray for a revival of faith in you and your church. So many people have damaged the reputation of your church. May they, like Saul/Paul, experience the power of your Holy Spirit entering their life and transforming them. I pray for those who are responsible for making decisions that affect the lives of large numbers of people; politicians, employers, church leaders, educators, scientists. I pray for those who are seriously ill and those close to death. Be with them, and those who care for them. I pray for my own needs.

Lord, in your mercy, hear my prayer.

Hymn: When Thomas heard From Jesus (Tune Aurelia."The churches one foundation")

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJHAgCt6M8w>

When Thomas heard from Jesus, "Now come and follow me,"
He surely went with gladness, for there was much to see.
He witnessed Jesus' teaching and saw his healing touch;
He found a faith to guide him, a friend he loved so much.

When Jesus spoke of heaven, bold Thomas dared to say,
"We don't know where you're going! How can we know the way?"
He wanted understanding of what he could not see.
Then Jesus reassured him, "The way is here — through me."

When crowds began to murmur and leaders raised their cry,
Brave Thomas spoke out firmly, "Let's go with him and die."
He ate at Jesus' table, partaking wine and bread;
Yet later with the others, he saw the cross and fled.

What joy on Easter evening when many saw the Lord!
Yet Thomas was not with them and would not trust their word.
When Christ appeared before him, his doubts were quickly gone;
He gladly knew that evening the joy of Easter dawn.

That man of faith saw Jesus at breakfast by the sea;
At Pentecost he witnessed so others would believe.
O Lord, may we — like Thomas — keep growing day by day;
Increase our faith and guide us, for Lord, you are the Way.

When Thomas heard from Jesus, "Now come and follow me,"

Blessing

As you head from this place, know that the grace of God goes before you,
Go with the Spirit in your midst, and the love of Christ in your hearts.
Go, to love as you were first loved.

Amen.