

**12 April 2026 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter St James Church Eucharist  
Exodus 14: 10-end & 15: 20-21; Acts 2: 14a, 22-32; John 20: 19-end**

**Sermon: Low Sunday**

This particular Sunday, the first one after Easter Day, has been given a rather unflattering nickname over the years: Low Sunday. This is because after beginning the long, focused journey of Lent on Ash Wednesday, with its discipline and reflection; then after the solemn, challenging walk through Holy Week, we finally arrived at Easter morning. And with great jubilation, in one of the most wonderful services I've ever been part of, we celebrated the risen Christ with joy, in many forms.

But then, it can all feel a bit flat. The congregation numbers drop, people go on holiday, the next big festival is nowhere in sight. Everything can feel a little subdued — low. Thus, we get 'Low Sunday.'

But that is not how it should be.

Far from being the first Sunday of back to mundane routine, this is the first Sunday when we begin to reflect on what the resurrection actually means for us, for our church, for our lives and for our future. Easter is not the end of a cycle; it is the beginning of a new one. A season in which the risen Christ invites us to walk with him into something new — something he longs to do *in us, for us, and through us*.

And this theme, with its encouragement and concerns, is peppered throughout three of the most amazing Bible readings.

**Tell them to go forward**

The scene at the Red Sea in Exodus is a challenging image of a community in transition. The Israelites have left Egypt, but they have not yet reached freedom. They stand between an uncrossable sea and an approaching army, and their first instinct is, naturally, fear. They look back at what they've left behind — not

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because it was good, but because it was familiar. The cry *“Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us here?”* is the cry of people who cannot yet imagine that God might be doing something new.

And into that fear, God says something astonishing: *“Tell the Israelites to go forward.”* Not *“wait until you feel ready.”* Not *“go back to what you know.”* But go forward, into a future with God at the helm.

This is where resurrection faith begins: trusting that God makes a way where we cannot see one.

This was where my own faith story began – at the Red Sea- well on the film the Ten Commandments anyway – I watched this in Easter 1996 and found myself drawn to reading Exodus 14 and asking – is there a God? I decided ‘yes’ – I let God in, and resurrection life began to shape my life, slowly but steadily, moving from old ways to new ones.

We as a parish and church, too, stand between what has been and what will be. I am sure many feel the pull of the past, but the risen Christ calls us forward and is already ahead of us, parting seas we can see no way across.

### **We are witnesses**

Peter’s sermon in Acts is the church’s first attempt to make sense of the resurrection. The disciples have been through their own Red Sea moment, Jesus’ death, their fear, their confusion and now they are trying to understand what this means. They were already to sneak away, now they are in front of the crowd. Peter stands up and declares that the resurrection is not simply God putting right the tragic death of Jesus; it is God beginning something new “and of that all of us are witnesses”

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Witnesses to the truth that death does not have the final word. To the truth that God's purposes continue even when ours falter. To the truth that there is a better future.

Peter reminds them that David himself foresaw a Messiah who would not be abandoned to death. In other words, the resurrection is not an after-action or a one-off, it is the fulfilment of God's long, patient work of renewal, resulting in a new kind of community: one shaped not by fear or worry, but by hope, courage, and most importantly, the Holy Spirit.

This is important for us to hear as a parish because God is already so very obviously at work bringing life and hope. Our task is to be witnesses: to look for signs of resurrection, to trust that God is at work, and to step into the future he is preparing, just as the original disciples did in their situation.

And what a bold contrast to how the disciples are acting in the Gospel reading.

**...so I send you**

In John's Gospel, the disciples are hiding behind locked doors. They are frightened, disoriented and unsure what to do next. But it is into that locked room, and into their fear, that Jesus comes. He does not wait for them to be perfect, or even wait for them to get their act together! He simply appears and says, "Peace be with you." This isn't just a greeting but a gift. A peace that steadies trembling hearts and anxious minds, and breathes new life into tired and fragile bodies.

Then Jesus does something extraordinary when he says: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." The resurrection is not just comfort, it is a commissioning. Not just reassurance, but a purpose. Not just presence, but a fresh calling.

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And then there is the infamous Thomas. Honest, wounded, and cautious. Jesus does not shame him for his doubt but meets him in it. He offers his wounds as proof that resurrection does not erase the past, but transforms it.

For us this can resonate. Christ meets us in our locked rooms, our anxieties, our uncertainties, our times of hesitancy, and give us peace. And he does not leave us there. He breathes his Spirit upon us and sends us into the work he has prepared. The risen Christ does not wait for a perfect faith; he calls us forward with the faith we have.

### **Easter season**

So this is not, despite what some might say, a low time for the Church. There will of course always be voices who find it easier to criticise than to hope, easier to point out what is wrong than to notice what God is doing. But resurrection people are called to see differently.

Sure we don't ignore what is wrong or where there are things that are clearly – not of God, because where God is working, so can be the opposition – a defeated Opposition, yes, but nevertheless, one with a sting in the tail. So be alert to that with its anti-life messages of lies, discord and fear.

But we *look* for signs of life. We *expect* God to be at work. We *trust* that the risen Christ is still moving among his people.

Low Sunday is only low if we misunderstand Easter.

And here in this parish, God *is* moving. People are coming for baptism, wanting to learn about God and explore faith. Couples are choosing to be married in church. Our schools are seeking deeper partnership with us. New conversations are opening, new opportunities emerging and new faces appearing at our doors.

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These are signs of resurrection and we are invited, or even commissioned to join in.

And that is the heart of it: resurrection life is about joining in. Joining in with the risen Christ, who through the Holy Spirit brings the presence of the Father into our hearts, our church, our community, and our society. From the first moment of creation, God's desire has been that his people share in his life and his work. And that invitation has never been withdrawn. It will stand until the day Christ returns...and beyond.

So today, on this so-called Low Sunday, the invitation is simple and joyful: Join in. Step forward. Come and see. Take your place in what God is doing. Not because we have all the answers, but because the risen Christ goes ahead of us. Not because the path is easy, but because the Spirit equips us. Not because we are strong, but because God is faithful.

This is not a low moment for us. This is a resurrection moment. And the risen Christ is calling us to move forward with him. Amen.

**Rev'd Richard Haynes 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter**