

The Awakening

Easter 2021 (4 April - 1 May)



There are periods in the history of humanity when those living through times of great transition feel something has happened to change the whole destiny of the world. The physical and spiritual and psychological effect of the resurrection had such an effect. It was said of the first Christians that they turned the known world upside down with their convincing beliefs that God had come into the world in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. They claimed it was an awakening of the human spirit to a new world order.

This month we too are looking for a new world order because we believe that we are simply reflecting the longing in so many hearts today for the renewal of the church. We're starting to talk about a season of awakening. A time when the Holy Spirit is going to draw near to us all and bring about a renewal of faith. We truly believe we are living in such a moment again. It can't be the same as other times but it is a 'shaking of the foundations moment'. There is a stirring in the air, across the world, like a changing of the guard, no one can quite put their finger on it, but we know when we come out of lockdown — lockdown will have transformed everything. Nothing will quite ever be the same again.

During the next four weeks of April we are going to invite our writers to pick up on the analogy of 'An Awakening' a realisation that the time for dreaming has past and we are longing for a visitation of the Almighty. One that will heal our broken world. A visitation based not on privilege or power or historical advantage but based on the deep knowledge that God is longing to reconcile his creation to himself and to each other. Our key text for the month is found in Revelation 3:2 where the Risen Christ speaks to the Church at Sardis saying "Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God."

- In week one we remind ourselves that the resurrection of Jesus is the beginning of God's new project to renew all of his creation.
- In week two we think of the unity that is created within Community out of Communion.
- In week three we look at the spiritual power that is available to the community of God's people through the Holy Spirit.
- In week four we focus on our core calling as God's people to be followers of Jesus.

Each week of the four week theme runs Sunday-Saturday and has its own subtheme, which contains daily Bible readings and thought triggers.

The Awakening of God's New Project (4 April, Easter Sunday)

NT Wright's Book *Surprised by Hope* makes a great introduction for the beginning of our theme to understand the immense meaning of the resurrection. Jesus' resurrection in the words of NT Wright is God's new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonise earth with the life of heaven. Is this not what the Lord's Prayer is all about? The resurrection is the foundation for a renewed way of life *for* and *in* our world. Easter is about proclaiming the awakening to the new dawn. Pentecost is all about the personal resetting of our lives because we have had our personal encounter with the Holy Spirit. Easter paints the big picture. Pentecost get us prepared for the personal resetting of life into action.

1. Acts 10: 34-43
 2. Isaiah 25: 6-9
 3. Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24
 4. 1 Corinthians 15: 1-11
 5. Acts 10: 34-43
 6. John 20: 1-20
 7. Mark 16: 1-8
1. **The Awakening — New Identity.** The new project brings about an awakening to forgiveness of sins and with it changed people
 2. **The Awakening — The Ending of Death.** The new project will bring death to an end and unite all peoples.
 3. **The Awakening to Enduring Love.** The new project brings about an awakening that is based on God's enduring love.
 4. **The Awakening to Understand Resurrection is No Dream.** The new project works in time and takes us out of time giving us a foothold into eternity.
 5. **The Awakening — Jesus, God's new Prototype Human.** This is no experiment Jesus is our pioneer human. We are not there yet but we are being changed into his likeness.
 6. **The Awakening from Disappointment.** The story of Mary is the story of everyone. The resurrection moves us from utter despair to unutterable joy.
 7. **The Awakening — Opening Eyes to the Eternal.** The story of the women is an invitation to look for the eternal gateway into that which lies beyond.

The Awakening of New Community and Communion (11 April)

The resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth awakened the disciples to a new community that God was forming across the world but also a new understanding of prayer that brought them into communion with God and with each other. It is this understanding of prayer today that allows us to still be part of this awakening.

1. Acts 4: 32-33

1. **The Awakening to a New Belonging.** This passage highlights a new understanding of belonging to each other and in this a sharing of resources — and in doing so a new spiritual power. When free from owning things how are we changed?

2. Psalm 133

2. **The Awakening of a New Unity.** So, as the psalmist understands, the true blessing comes from living in unity and harmony.

3. 1 John 1:1 - 2:2

3. **The Awakening of Revelation.** Here is an honest retelling of what it was like to encounter the radical new man. God's new Adam. Each of us are being called to start living the project.

4. John 20: 19-31

4. **The Awakening of The Sending.** Here is a powerful picture of the new Adam sending out others to live in the power of his Spirit. Living in a power to change the world.

5. Psalm 4

5. **The Awakening to Trust God.** The psalmist realises God answers prayers. Such prayer is essential knowing we have been sent on a mission.

6. 1 John 2: 26-27

6. **The Awakening to Hold Firm to the Truth.** The encouragement to have confidence in what we have been taught

7. Acts 3: 1-10

7. **The Awakening to Healing.** In the sending of the Apostles discovered they were awakened to reach out through the power of healing. Is it time for then church to awaken once more to the healing presence of Christ among us?

The Awakening of Spiritual Power (18 April)

This week our readings invite us to consider that God may be awakening many within the Church to a new vision of what it means to pray "Your Kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." It is the Holy Spirit who gives the power to make the Kingdom a reality in our everyday existence. Resurrection is not for life after death. The resurrection of Jesus is about eternity paying it back into our time. It's about bringing heaven to earth.

1. Acts 3: 12-19

1. **The Awakening of Grace Through Healing.** Peter heals a beggar and people respond. The gift of healing often is the key that evokes a response of gratitude. So let's be open to the mystery of divine healing.

2. Psalm 4

2. **The Awakening to the Power of Prayer.** Here is a psalm that speaks of the joy and communion we encounter when we make time to be with God.

3. 1 John 3: 1-7

3. **The Awakening to See the Face of Christ.** Here is a devotional section of scripture describing the longing for Communion with Jesus face to face. It is through these encounters that we become more aware of the spiritual power given to the people of God.

4. Luke 24: 36b-48

4. **The Awakening to Mission.** Mission is the gift and work and power of the Holy Spirit. It is Christ's mission. The awakening is to understand the extent of the mission. The message of forgiveness is for all people. God has no favourites.

5. Psalm 23

5. **The Awakening to the Presence of the Shepherd.** No need to be afraid — the Shepherd goes before us. His presence makes everything all right.

6. Acts 4: 1-4

6. **The Awakening to the Power of Resurrection.** The telling phrase in this passage is that Peter and John were talking about a resurrection from the dead. The beggar who was healed was pointing to a resurrection that can happen not just in the next life but here and now.

7. Acts 4: 5-22

7. **The Awakening to the Power of the Name of Jesus.** This is the story of the rejected one who becomes the cornerstone of the building. This is an opportunity to explore in greater depth the significance of the outsider bringing in the outsiders . The rejected beggar is given new life in the name of the rejected messiah.

The Awakening to our True Purpose (25 April)

This year is the twentieth anniversary of the 'Church Without Walls' (CWW) report to the General Assembly. In that report it was implied that only when we as disciples become alive to our true purpose will we begin to live out the radical call to follow Jesus. This week we are going to remind ourselves of our true purpose. We have asked the writer for this week to return to the CWW report and to engage with the section entitled the Core Calling of the Church. The awakening to spiritual power requires an additional responsibility. As Christians we need to grow in our faith and discernment so that our spiritual lives grow up into full maturity. Paul talks about this in Ephesians 4. This calls for an awakening to our true purpose to follow Jesus.

1. Mark 6: 30-34

2. Ephesians 1: 3-14

3. John 1: 43-50

4. Matthew 10: 37-42

5. Matthew 28: 16-20

6. Luke 17: 20-21

7. Ephesians 4: 14-16

1. **The Awakening of Compassion.** Compassion is the key that opens our hearts to the possibilities of miracles. Jesus saw people who were lost and alone looking for their purpose. If we are to follow him this too will be our focus.
2. **The Awakening to God's Glory.** Our purpose is fulfilled when we realise we are called to live to bring praise and glory to God. As the Westminster Shorter Catechism states: "Our chief purpose is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever."
3. **The Awakening to a Personal Commitment.** The CWW report suggested that the core calling of the church was to follow Jesus. However it said "Like a computer icon, the words "Follow me" carry within them the complex and comprehensive processes of being God's people in God's world."
4. **The Awakening to a Sacrificial Lifestyle.** The way of Christ is the way of servanthood. It is as the hymn says "to leave self behind". To die to self and be resurrected as "a new creation".
5. **The Awakening to a Global Sending.** The Gospel is for all people of all time. The Church is called to be a truly inclusive global community.
6. **The Awakening to the Kingdom.** So what does it mean to have the Kingdom of God within us? This is an opportunity to tie up the whole month by looking again at NT Wright's Book 'Surprised by Hope'. We are called to bring heaven into earth.
7. **The Awakening of Love.** Finally, we are called to grow together building one another up in love.