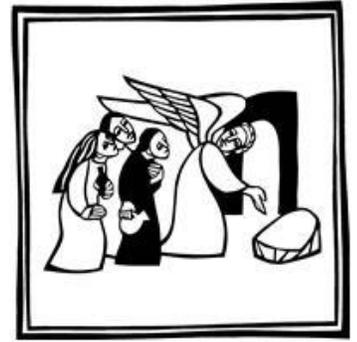


**WORSHIP AT HOME: Week of 4/4/21**  
**Easter Sunday / Resurrection of Our Lord**



*In the event you are unable to view or hear an MPLC service, here's a brief worship order you can use at home. You might light a candle before you begin to quiet your heart and prepare to worship God. You will need a bible to look up the readings. You may read aloud or in silence to yourself.*

BEGIN: Alleluia! Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!  
(You may trace a cross on your forehead or make the sign of the cross.)  
In the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

GIVE THANKS FOR THE GIFT OF BAPTISM: We thank you, risen Christ, for the water of life where you make us new, leading us from death to life, from tears to joy. We bless you, risen Christ, that your Spirit comes to us in the grace-filled waters of rebirth, like rains to our thirsting earth, like streams that revive our souls, like cups of cool water shared with strangers. Breathe your peace on your church when we hide in fear. Clothe us with your mercy and forgiveness. Send us companions on our journey as we share your life. Make us one, risen Christ. Cleanse our hearts. Shower us with life. To you be given all praise, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God, now and forever. Amen. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

READ: Isaiah 25:6-9

<sup>6</sup>On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples  
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,  
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.

<sup>7</sup>And he will destroy on this mountain  
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,  
the sheet that is spread over all nations;

<sup>8</sup>he will swallow up death forever.

Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces,  
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,  
for the LORD has spoken.

<sup>9</sup>It will be said on that day,  
Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.  
This is the LORD for whom we have waited;  
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

PRAY: God of mercy, we no longer look for Jesus among the dead, for he is alive and has become the Lord of life. Increase in our minds and hearts the risen life we share with Christ, and help us to grow as your people toward the fullness of eternal life with you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

READ: Acts 10:34-43 and Mark 16:1-8

SERMON: *by Pastor Beth Ann L. Stone*

They had seen it with their own eyes. The women had watched from a distance as their teacher's arms were nailed onto a crosspiece of wood. They saw the wooden beam hoisted in the air, his body dangling painfully from his outstretched arms. They heard people mock their Lord while he struggled just to take a breath. They watched as darkness fell across the land, in the middle of the afternoon, and they heard Jesus CRY OUT...and breathe no more. The women even saw a man retrieve his body from the cross before any wild animals could get to it. They watched the man carefully wrapped Jesus' body in a linen cloth, laid it in a cave-like tomb, and rolled a heavy stone before the entrance. They had seen it with their own eyes. There was no mistaking it; Jesus was dead.

These women never kidded themselves that Jesus was just in a shock-induced coma; they never supposed that this was merely a trick Jesus was pulling, a miracle worthy of the man who once turned water into wine. And they envisioned no pretty metaphors of Jesus being like a caterpillar in a cocoon, soon to emerge better than ever in a butterfly of resurrection. No...they stared the cold reality of death in the face...painful, bloody, hopeless death that meant the end of everything Jesus had brought into their lives. No more lively conversations about the kingdom of God. No more community of disciples where women and men and even children shared equally in their teacher's company. No more crowds of needy people clamoring for healing, finding their hope in Jesus' presence. Everything that had brought them joy and peace in the past months with Jesus...had come to a spectacular, crashing halt in that tomb. Jesus was really dead.

Have you experienced crushing disappointment like that? Have you ever been through a time of feeling close to Jesus—a time of great spiritual growth, when you truly felt God's presence during a difficult time, like Jesus had become someone you counted on and trusted? And have you ever felt that closeness evaporate? Have you next felt your passion for Jesus cooling, your attention turning to other, more pressing things as the crisis passed? It's surely not as drastic a loss as Jesus' followers experienced that Friday afternoon...but we can understand just a little of their pain and confusion recalling when our own connection with Jesus seemed to be fading.

The women went to the tomb that day expecting to see a dead Jesus. A dead Jesus would surely have filled them with grief...but what they found instead filled them with alarm! He was gone! The tomb was empty! And a young man in white told them, "Jesus isn't here; he is risen!" Just try and wrap your mind around THAT! Dead people don't rise again! Dead is dead. Dead is permanent. Dead means the end of relationships, the end of promises, the end of existence for a human being.

But not for God. Dead may be dead, but through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God changed the rules on "permanent". Jesus paved the way for relationship and promises and EXISTANCE to continue even beyond death. Jesus remains our teacher and friend and companion EVEN AFTER he was nailed to a cross until he was good and dead because GOD REFUSES TO LET DEATH WIN. Through Jesus Christ God shows us that God's love for humankind is stronger than the power of evil to sever our relationship with God. Now nothing can separate us from Jesus...not HIS death and not OUR death, not our sinful nature, and not the power of the Devil, not our fears or our anger, our stupidity or our inexperience...NOTHING can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

And Mark's Gospel story reveals something else about Jesus, too. The young man at the tomb told the women, "Go and tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." Galilee is where the women and the disciples lived. It's where they worked. And the good news is that Jesus was going there ahead of them. Their teacher whose companionship once seemed trapped in a dark tomb for all eternity NOW promised to go ahead of them to the places where they lived and worked. Jesus would be there, waiting for them, when they returned.

And Jesus is waiting for us, too, in our homes. The risen Jesus meets us in our daily lives...and there we "see him, just as he told" us. As Easter people, changed by our encounter with the risen Lord, we can see and hear Jesus through the eyes of faith. We see him, just as he told us, whenever we call on his spirit in our midst. We hear him in the voices that speak of peace in our world, and in the voices that rail against injustice. We see him in the stranger, the person in need, the victim of violence or injustice whom we treat with new dignity and compassion. We hear him in a quiet moment of solitude, our prayers lifted in sure and eager hope of an answer. Jesus goes ahead of us wherever we are. We can see him with our own eyes...the risen Lord, here in our midst. Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

PRAY: Praise for God's power revealed in the resurrection, of love stronger than death; for God's power to raise new life throughout creation; for Christ's peace to prevail in strained relationships; for God's healing power for all in need of hope; for our congregation as we worship this day together in spirit; for ourselves, and for those we name before God:

Ben Poulsen, Dick Jonas, Ross Larson, Sharon Polak, Trina Larsen, Linda Petersen, Helen Fiones, Sheila Johnson, Scott Christiansen, Karen Tyykila, Cathy Spatz, Jennifer Vyeda, Diane Poulsen, Barb Mains, Pastor Kara Baylor, Joanne Hoornstra, Laura Luehr, Mary Burks, Leilani Kellner, Sue Henderson, Tom Guyton, Paul Pruessing, Barbara Graham, Jill Peterson, people suffering from Covid-19, and those we name aloud or in our hearts...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

BLESS: May our glorious God grant us a spirit of wisdom to know and to love the risen Lord Jesus. The God of life, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless us now and forever. Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Go in peace. Share the good news. Thanks be to God.

