

## Home Service for Easter 2021

### Welcome and Announcements

You might notice a few changes. You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

### Call to Worship:

Hear the good news: Christ is Risen! But we watched him die. Sing the good news: Christ is alive! But we saw him buried in the tomb. Share the good news. Death has lost its sting! We will sing with the angels and laugh with the saints of God. Amen.

### Opening Prayer:

God of Hope, in the midst of death, you call forth life. When all hope seemed gone, you raised Jesus from the grave. We come before you today, longing for your life-giving presence. God of new life, raise us up with all your people. Lift us from the tombs of our despair and doubt, that we may rejoice in your power over death. God of joy, fill our hearts with alleluias as we sing your praises. Glory to God. Amen!

### Prayer of Confession:

God of life and love, like Peter, we gaze into the empty tomb and see only death. Like Mary, we stand weeping over loss. We so often feel hopeless. We do not recognize any possibility for joy. Surprise us with your work in the world. May we dry our tears, as we dance into new life. Amen.

### Words of Assurance

*The risen Jesus offers forgiveness of sins through his name. Rejoice, Jesus gives you new life.*

### Read Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
his love endures forever.

<sup>2</sup>Let Israel say:

“His love endures forever.”

<sup>14</sup> The LORD is my strength and my defense<sup>[a]</sup>;  
he has become my salvation.  
<sup>15</sup> Shouts of joy and victory  
resound in the tents of the righteous:  
“The LORD’s right hand has done mighty things!  
<sup>16</sup> The LORD’s right hand is lifted high;  
the LORD’s right hand has done mighty things!”  
<sup>17</sup> I will not die but live,  
and will proclaim what the LORD has done.  
<sup>18</sup> The LORD has chastened me severely,  
but he has not given me over to death.  
<sup>19</sup> Open for me the gates of the righteous;  
I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.  
<sup>20</sup> This is the gate of the LORD  
through which the righteous may enter.  
<sup>21</sup> I will give you thanks, for you answered me;  
you have become my salvation.  
The stone the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;  
<sup>23</sup> the LORD has done this,  
and it is marvelous in our eyes.  
<sup>24</sup> The LORD has done it this very day;  
let us rejoice today and be glad.

#### Prayers of the People:

*We thank you, O God of great love, for the gift of life on this joyous Easter morning. When we face tombs of darkness and despair, may we stop, listen and hear the voice of Jesus say, "Do not be afraid; fear not, for I am with you always, even to the end of time." Let the resurrection resound throughout our community that because Christ lives, we live in the fullness of life also. Let us bring the gift of new life in the form of hope to those who live in despair. Let the resurrection resound that we might bring friendship to the lonely, forgiveness to the penitent, kindness to the mean-spirited, calm to the angry, hospitality to those who feel unworthy of such a gift, fortitude to those whose strength is waning, peace to the hostile, a helping hand to those who feel overwhelmed, acceptance to the disenfranchised, a welcoming smile to those who are strangers in our midst and always, the gift of grace to a world unused to a love which never lets us go. Our joy overflows on this day of new life; may our hallelujahs echo in our hearts as we go forth from this place in the assurance of the presence of a loving God who gave*

*his Son that we might know what a life of love looks like. With unbridled gratitude, let us pray together in the name of Jesus, the Promised One, the Christ, our risen Lord who is with us now and forever, and who taught us to say when we pray ...*

## Lord's Prayer

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

Read the Lesson: Acts 10:34-43

Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism <sup>35</sup> but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. <sup>36</sup> You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. <sup>37</sup> You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— <sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

<sup>39</sup> "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, <sup>40</sup> but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. <sup>41</sup> He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup> He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup> All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Read the Epistle Lesson: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. <sup>2</sup> By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

<sup>3</sup> For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance<sup>[a]</sup>: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas,<sup>[b]</sup> and then

to the Twelve. <sup>6</sup> After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, <sup>8</sup> and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

<sup>9</sup> For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. <sup>11</sup> Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

Read the Gospel Lesson: John 20:1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. <sup>2</sup> So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

<sup>3</sup> So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. <sup>4</sup> Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup> He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. <sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, <sup>7</sup> as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus’ head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. <sup>8</sup> Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. <sup>9</sup> (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) <sup>10</sup> Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

<sup>11</sup> Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb <sup>12</sup> and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

<sup>13</sup> They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”

“They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” <sup>14</sup> At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

<sup>15</sup> He asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?” Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means “Teacher”).

<sup>17</sup> Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

<sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.

## Message

Jesus Christ is risen today! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Let us pray: Dear Heavenly Father, on this day we recall how you raised Jesus, your beloved Son, from death. And through his resurrection, we have come to realize your tremendous gift of grace, which we receive through his sacrificial death on the cross for our redemption. The victory belongs to you, the triumph belongs to you and to the willingness of your Son, our redeemer, who in faith, placed his life into your hands, trusting that you would fulfill your promise to redeem all who come to faith in him. We pray that you might strengthen our faith, accept our praise, and lead us to follow our risen Lord as his true disciples. Amen

The first Easter morning three different people came to the empty tomb, Mary Magdalene, John, the disciple Jesus loved, and Peter. All three came with a different approach, with a different attitude.

This morning I want to look at Mary. Mary came to the tomb to anoint the body as was the custom in those days. She saw from a distance that the stone was moved away. She stops. She stares. And then she runs back to the others to tell them what she has seen. She runs back to the disciples and tells them "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." She assumes that the body has been taken.

At this point Mary does not think about the words of Jesus and the idea of the resurrection. All she can think about is the body is gone. Sometimes when we encounter the harshness of life, all we can think about is the act that is affecting us. All we can think about is the hurt, the pain, the brokenness that has happened to us. Mary was like that. She did not think she reacted.

But Mary did not give up either. She goes back to the tomb. She still does not go in, but she returns to the tomb. John and Peter go in, look around and they go back to the others. Mary stays outside the tomb and is weeping. Weeping for the one who died, weeping because she fears his body is gone and they will not be able to

anoint it. But then Mary gets some courage and peeks inside the tomb. As she peeks, she gets more and more courageous and goes all the way in the tomb.

And what does she see. Two angels. One sitting at the head and one at the feet of where the body was supposed to be. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Mary still does not understand about the resurrection, but she is getting closer.

As Mary turns to leave the tomb she sees someone in the doorway. She supposes it to be the gardener, and He speaks to her saying: "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?" She replies, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."

She still does not recognize Jesus. But then something wonderful happens. Something great happens. Jesus says just one word, "Mary" and immediately Mary knows that it is Jesus and she says "Teacher."

It happened! Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. He is alive standing next to Mary. Can you imagine the joy, the utter happiness which was leaping in her heart. I bet she could have yelled so loud that everyone in ear shot could hear her say Jesus is alive.

Jesus then gives Mary some instructions as he says ""Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

What a shock! What a glorious shock that must have been for her! No one had stolen the corpse of Jesus – He had been raised from the dead! He was alive! And he would be ascending to live forever in the kingdom of his Heavenly Father! And I can imagine, that just as Peter and John had raced to the empty tomb in fear and grief, Mary raced back to them the glorious news she couldn't wait to share. I have seen the Lord! He is risen! And from that moment on, the way that the disciples of Christ of every age look at death, has forever been changed.

Mary has seen the Lord. Mary the one who was afraid to poke her head into the tomb, Mary who could not fathom that Jesus had risen was the one chosen by Jesus to go back and tell the others what had happened.

Mary, a woman, was the one in all gospels to go and tell the good news of the resurrection. Mary was the one that Jesus chose for this important mission. Not Peter, not John, but Mary.

I found a poem which addresses Mary's experience and feelings written by an unknown author:

"How can I tell...That we've all been set free?...I'm only a woman;.....They won't listen to me.....I saw him...The One we all thought was dead....They'll think I'm imagining...Out of my head....I talked with Jesus;....I knelt at his feet....My Master's alive!...Will the others believe?.....Will they beat me or scoff at me?...Put me away?.....It's my duty to tell,...But what will they say?....

Mary and the women were the first ones to understand and perceive that Jesus was indeed alive. How ironic that the people whom society saw as weak, and not being of much value, the women, were the first ones to understand about the resurrection.

This point is important, for Jesus came not to those who had it all, but He came to those who knew they needed someone, a Savior. He came to those who understood the brokenness of the world.

That empty tomb filled Mary Magdalene's head with an incredible sense of joy and comfort and hope. It changed her life forever. Jesus is just as much alive today as he was on that first Easter morning. The joy, comfort and hope you receive this morning from the Word of God is just as real as the joy, comfort and hope Mary received that first Easter morning. Mary returned to those disciples a different person; someone whose world had changed for the better. As you leave here this morning and return home, may you carry with you that same hope that Mary felt. **Christ is risen. He is risen indeed.** Amen.

Benediction:

*May God's blessing of new life be yours.*

*May God's gift of peace fill your hearts.*

*May God's promise of forgiveness give you hope.*

*May you go forth to tell the good news: We have seen the risen Lord! Alleluia!*