

Home Service for 4/5/2026 Blessed Easter!

Welcome and Announcements

You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

Easter teaches us that life never ends and love never dies.

Call to Worship:

Easter people, Christ is risen! God is doing a new thing! Hallelujah! Christ is risen!
Life has conquered death! Love has overcome fear! Hallelujah! Christ is risen!
God has transformed a dead end into a new start! Hallelujah! Christ is risen!
Easter people, raise your voices! Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

Opening Prayer:

God of mystery and might, on a dawn shrouded in grief and pain, you surprise us with the light of your wondrous love. We come to the tomb expecting death, but find life instead. Take us back to that moment, when fear was healed by hope and death was banished by life. In the holy awe of Easter morning, may our sing out our joy, for Christ, our Lord, has risen today! Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Holy and loving God, when we hide away in tombs of death, lead us into life. When we cower in our fears and regret, encourage us with your mercy and your grace, that we might claim the life you offer. Help us embrace your love and live in your risen presence. In hope and joy, we pray. Amen.

Words of Assurance:

We have been raised with Christ! Thanks be to God for this glorious gift.

Read Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

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

² Let Israel say:

“His love endures forever.”

¹⁹ Open for me the gates of the righteous;
I will enter and give thanks to the Lord.

- 20 This is the gate of the Lord
through which the righteous may enter.
- 21 I will give you thanks, for you answered me;
you have become my salvation.
- 22 The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
- 23 the Lord has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes.
- 24 The Lord has done it this very day;
let us rejoice today and be glad.
- 25 Lord, save us!
Lord, grant us success!
- 26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
From the house of the Lord we bless you. ^[a]
- 27 The Lord is God,
and he has made his light shine on us.
- With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession
up^[b] to the horns of the altar.
- 28 You are my God, and I will praise you;
you are my God, and I will exalt you.
- 29 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

Prayers of the People:

How magnificent this place is today. The flowers that grace our worship area shout the good news of new life. Their colors and shapes dance with joy at the news of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. And we also rise in hope and celebration at this good news. The journey has been long, and it does not end here, but rather we are given new “marching orders” to go forth in confidence for God, to witness to the good news of the resurrection and the power of God’s love in Jesus Christ. We are called to be bearers of the light and hope to areas in which darkness still stands. Keep us open to the needs and hearts of other people. Help us not to be so quick to condemn as we are to love. Help us to reach out in kindness and compassion whenever and wherever we can for healing and hope. Remind us again of the many ways in which you have and continue to bless our lives. For we ask these things in the name of the Resurrected Christ. AMEN.

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 ³⁵ but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. ³⁶ 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. ³⁷ You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— ³⁸ 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.

³⁹ "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, ⁴⁰ but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. ⁴¹ 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. ⁴² 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. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Read the Epistle Lesson: Colossians 3:1-4

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your ^[a] life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Matthew 28:1-10

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

² There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

⁵ The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”

⁸ So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

Message

Today we take another trip to the empty tomb. We should be just as excited as the women were, that first Easter morning. As they found what they did not expect. What we find is that the empty tomb, is just the very beginning of the story. The empty tomb is a place of life, it is more than just life; it is eternal life. Eternal life is what you and I are celebrating today. This empty tomb is a place of life, a life filled with the fact that Christ has been raised from the dead, so that you and I and every believer will be raised with Him. We consider this resurrection fact as Matthew tells us that the tomb is a place of life, so come and see.

The two Mary's could hardly wait. The law stated, 'No work on the Sabbath', so when Jesus was crucified, his body was quickly taken down from the cross and placed unprepared in a tomb because it was the Sabbath. So, they had to wait until after the Sabbath, so at the very first hint of light, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary started to the tomb to finish preparing the body of Jesus, but it did not work out that way.

Before they got there, we have nature testifying to the power of its Creator by a violent earthquake. An angel of the Lord came down from heaven, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. We are told that the angel's appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. They were scared stiff as our text says. They were scared of this holiness of God that was before them. This single angel of the Lord rolled back the stone, which took several men to roll it into place.

As the women were going to the tomb, they must have wondered how they were going to move the stone. But when they get there, the stone is already rolled back. Certainly, the women did not expect to find anyone at the tomb, except possibly the guards. They thought that they would be the first ones there. They did not expect to see an angel, but when they saw the angel, the angel said, 'Do not be afraid.' Do not be afraid, of course they were frightened because all the things they thought, did not take place, in fact the opposite. Then the angel goes on and says, 'I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here.' Suddenly, their hopes were probably dashed to the ground because the angel knew what they were looking for. They were looking for Jesus who was crucified and the last time they saw their Savior, Jesus was on the cross and as He breathed His last breath He said, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' They saw Jesus as He was taken down from the cross and hastily laid in the tomb. Now the angel tells them, He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Do you remember that Jesus had told His disciples that He would go and suffer and die and be put to death, but on the third day He would rise again from the dead. The angel reminded the women of that. 'He has risen, just as he said. Come and see...' Come and see that, just as Jesus spoke, so it was done. Just as Jesus said, so He came back to life. Come and see. Jesus is risen.

Today we know, with confidence and as a blessed certainty of our faith, that Christ is risen. 'He is not here,' the angel tells us. Come and see! Come and see that the tomb is empty. That empty tomb is a place of life, a place of eternal life. You and I know that because God, in His infinite love for us, in reality reached down and made us believe. We were born into this world, but God in His grace works faith in our hearts. Through baptism and the washing of the Word, He makes us believe. As He makes us believe, we rejoice in our salvation. You and I know and believe by God's grace, that life and immortality are ours because of the gospel.

The empty tomb is a place of life. The angel invites us to come and see. As we come and see the place where Jesus lay, then also like the women, the angel tells us to go and tell. And the angel says, He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples. That was the women's mission on that first Easter Sunday. As they came, saw and realized that 'yes, what the angel was saying was true, that also they had to go and tell the disciples what had really happened. What Jesus had told them was true, what the angel had told them was true, what they had seen was true. Christ has risen from the dead. The message of the angel, "tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.'" The women came and saw. They went to tell the disciples.

The angel announced that first Easter message that ‘He is not here.’ We are given the reaction of the women. For we are told that the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. They were still a little bit scared. They had expected to see the body of Jesus. They had brought spices and other things to prepare His body. They were filled with great joy knowing that the angel did not lie, knowing that the empty tomb did not lie. As they were on their way to the disciples filled with great joy, suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. If they could be filled with greater joy, they would be. They were not going to let Jesus get away were they? They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. We are told they put their arms around His legs and grabbed him.

Jesus tells them, “Do not be afraid.” He knew that was not what they expected. He knew they might be frightened. Then He said, “Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.” The message did not change. ‘Go and tell.’ The message did not change, go and tell the disciples that they will see me. The angel spoke it, Jesus spoke it. The women went and told this message filled with Easter joy.

That is the joy that you and I have in this life. Sometimes we forget that Easter joy. You know, Easter really is a special Sunday. It seems to be that everyone is a little more joyous. Yet we know, as believers, Easter joy is not just limited to this Sunday, but it is to be part of every Sunday. This Easter joy is to be part of everyday of our lives. That is all the more important in this day and age when there is not so much joy around us, or so it seems. Let us rejoice and be glad in our salvation today, every Sunday, and even every day.

Our loving Lord says by faith we have come to see that the tomb is empty. It is a place of life. You and I have life to the fullest. Oh yes, from time to time, our life does not seem to be filled. It may even seem empty, as promises around us are broken, as we face heartache and trouble and sickness and sorrow and all of those things that affect our lives because of sin. The Lord fills our life up with joy because He has forgiven our sins. We were dead in sin, but now we are alive in Christ. Just as Christ came back from the dead, so you and I are made alive through the forgiveness of sins. That is a powerful message. That is the message that we are to go and tell others. That was the message the Lord gave to His first disciples and He also gives to us. ‘Don’t be afraid. Christ is risen.’

This all began at the empty tomb. The empty tomb, which is a place of life, that you and I can come and see. Not just today but every day we can get out the Scriptures and read them for ourselves and find that the tomb is still empty so that

our lives may be full, full of forgiveness, full of faith. As we come and see, we realize our lives are changed. As we come and see we can also rejoice and be glad in our salvation, then we are even anxious and excited to go and tell. Go and tell that simple message, 'Do not be afraid. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed.' Come and see and then joyfully, go and tell. The empty Easter tomb is a place of life. Amen.

Benediction:

Go now in the blessing of God, who meets death with life, hatred with love, and hopeless endings with abundant possibilities, to build a community of life, love, and flourishing as Easter people, followers of the Risen Christ! Amen.