

## **Present Resurrection**

Jubilee Mennonite Church

April 21, 2019

Easter

**Purpose:** To Celebrate the reality of the resurrection as the ongoing work of the redeeming God.

**Message:** God in Christ introduces the reality of resurrection, changing our reality here, now, and forever more.

**Scripture:** John 20:1-18 (I will read); 1 Corinthians 15:12-26 (Please read)

**Synopsis:** Easter is not something we remember. It is something we live and breath. As important and fascinating as the stories of the resurrection are, our cause for celebration is not that God raised Jesus once upon a time. Rather it is the proclamation that God is making all things new, creating resurrection here and now. Our work is not to explain necessarily the physicality of the historic event, but to speak with hopeful vision toward the ways in which God's new life is our present reality.

[Preaching on Easter Sunday isn't about convincing people](#)

[Transformational Encounter luke 24\\_36-48 4-22-2012.docx](#)

[Easter Day BCenter for Excellence in Preaching](#)

[New Earth heavens new Luke 24\\_1-12 4-4-2010 Easter.doc](#)

[You are Grounded](#)

[Surprised with Resurrection Luke 24\\_13-35 5-16-2010.doc](#)

["why are you weeping easter John 20\\_1-18 4-24-2011.ppt", "Why are you weeping easter John 20\\_1-18 4-24-2011.doc"](#)

## **John 20:1-18**

Mary Magdalene  
came to the tomb  
and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

<sup>2</sup> So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple,  
the one whom Jesus loved,  
and said to them,

"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb,  
and we do not know where they have laid him."

*[Then Peter and the Disciple whom Jesus loved raced, neck and neck to the tomb.  
They went inside, saw the grave clothes empty  
And were confused.]*

<sup>10</sup> Then the disciples returned to their homes.

<sup>11</sup> But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb.  
As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb;  
<sup>12</sup> and she saw two angels in white,  
sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying,  
one at the head and the other at the feet.

<sup>13</sup> They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?"  
She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord,  
and I do not know where they have laid him."

<sup>14</sup> When she had said this,  
she turned around and saw Jesus standing there,  
but she did not know that it was Jesus.

<sup>15</sup> Jesus said to her,  
"Woman, why are you weeping?  
Whom are you looking for?"

Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him,  
"Sir, if you have carried him away,  
tell me where you have laid him,  
and I will take him away."

<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Mary!"

She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher).

<sup>17</sup> Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me,  
because I have not yet ascended to the Father.

But go to my brothers and say to them,  
'I am ascending to my Father and your Father,  
to my God and your God.'"

<sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples,  
"I have seen the Lord";  
and she told them that he had said these things to her.

There is a point in every traumatic experience, you have to face facts. You have to turn around and check to see if it is all true. Someone has to stop and check to make sure the death is real, that it has indeed occurred, and the details can be documented. It is logical. It is natural. It is part of what it takes to the uncanny reality of physical death. It is the marking of one reality and the beginning of another. One of my most vivid memories as child was being ushered through the line to see the body of my grandfather laid out in his best suit. It was so surreal—uber real—as the reality of death was transformed from a phone call in the night into the reality of knowing that we were to be parted. It is part of the process. It is just something that has to be done to make the unimaginable begin to dawn as the new normal to set in. We have to make sure that it is real. Someone has to go and see.

And I think that is where we find Mary in her trip to the tomb. *Early in the morning, while it was still dark she came to see where Jesus had been lain.* She is alone, according to John. Matthew has her with another Mary and Mary Magdalene. Mark has two Marys and Salome. Luke has a small crew of women off to take on a task. But here she is all alone. Yesterday was the Sabbath and this purpose was off the table. But now as the sun is rising on the new week, she is going to pay her respects; she is going to see whether the horrific events of Friday were real after all. It's natural. It's normal. It's what is expected. But what she finds is anything but.

It feels like we are in this same place—going to see what is real and what is not. Sometimes it seems that my task for this given day is to stand up and to explain the resurrection. As if I adequately lay out the evidence, and underlie it with theological meaning, and top it off with the promise of the risen Christ coming again and soon, we can arrive at the inescapable facts of what precisely happened. The trouble is, any of this, all of this is quite beyond me. This is not something I am able to prove. Not because I do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ: I wholly do without apology. Nor do I have theological issues with the accounts of the Gospel writers, despite their divergent tales and messy story lines (there are so many guesses and miss cues it seems a hard way to reach the climax of a story). Nor do I stand here wishing to invite us all not to understand each to our own ability. It is none of these. The reason I cannot, and I think, I should not prove the reality of the resurrection is simply it is not able to be proven. It is not of our brand of reality. It is not natural life as we have grown to understand it. It is not a

logical argument to be made, nor a medical reality to explained. I cannot in any convincing manner explain the historical event of the resurrection, nor shall I try.

But it is truth. This I know, and this I do proclaim. Not your ordinary, everyday sort of truth where 2 plus 2 makes four and the square root of 9 is 3, the incontrovertible realities by which our universe is defined. But it is a truth of our believing. A truth of our knowing; a truth of our living out. Our believing does not, of its self, make it true; but it is something that we have seen and heard and experienced in our own lives; truth which tells us something beyond what mere logic can tell. It is a truth that tells confirms for us the nature of God and the mission of the one God sent, that tells us that there is a reason for hope even when we are confronted by the difficult realities of our world. It is a truth that allows us to celebrate even in our most deathly of days. Since we celebrate Easter once a year, it is easy to fall into the trap that what we celebrate today is a historical event of 2000 ish years ago. But it is bigger than that. This is the day that God with us changed everything forever more. Today we celebrate the beginning of the reality of resurrection for all of us; As such, Easter is not something we remember, but is a present reality that we live each and every day. Rowan Williams, the retired Archbishop of Canterbury phrases this idea well: *the believer's life is a testimony to the risen-ness of Jesus: he or she demonstrates that Jesus is not dead by living a life in which Jesus is the never-failing source of affirmation, challenge, enrichment and enlargement—a pattern, a dance, intelligible as a pattern only when its pivot and heart become manifest. The believer shows Jesus as the center of his or her life.*

The question for today is not so much what happened way back when, but where are we meeting Jesus in the here and now. That means that we encounter the risen Christ in the day to day ness of our life and living. And, if we are honest, that is a little bit scary. Because a risen Christ, comes and speaks to us, challenges us, embraces us, and invites us to be part of the work of resurrecting a death dealing world. We have so domesticated and familiarized the story of the empty tomb that I think we fail, often, to really understand what it really means to find nothing but folded grave clothes behind the rolled away stone: it's not just an occurrence—it's an invitation. Resurrection means that there are no longer any limits when it comes to us and God. We are so used to our broken world, so used to the way things are, the way that the powers work,

we may not be prepared to encounter the full impact of what it would mean for the broken Lord to be the resurrected healer, for resurrection to be on the table.

Because we are never quite sure how embracing resurrection might change us, where it might take us. Resurrection, new life, does not fit our agendas, our life plans, and it takes off to places we can never predict. We are threatened with resurrection. We can be threatened with what it might mean for us and for the neatly erected barriers that we maintain for ourselves, to have God come to us even invite us into a new life. We often, agree with Robert Frost and maintain that ‘good fences make good neighbors, especially when it comes to our carefully constructed protections against a God who would break down our barriers and come in with a different agenda, a different view than that of life more ordinary, but would break down the barriers of the way that the world works, even the rules of nature itself, to teach us that in love, there is nothing which can be so death dealing that it is beyond the power of God to break in and bring about change, life, and hope.

Easter has come, and the tomb is empty and that makes all the difference. The stone has been rolled away and so too the barriers that we so often see as so unmovable are no more. The powers do not have the final say, death is not the final chapter. Life is the rule in all things and through all things, even when we would think that our world, our situation, even our very selves are beyond hope, beyond healing, and might remain forever broken. Resurrection reminds us that there is more to this world than what is before us, what we can see, touch, and buy, no matter how pervasively it may appear to the contrary, because there was more in store for the one who was come and called us to follow; more going on at the cross than just the tragic death of an innocent man put to death as a rabble and a nuisance. Easter has come and resurrection has come, and the barriers are no more between God and us, between the purely holy and the persistently sinful and broken. The grave is empty and so too is the well of guilt and punishment that would say that we are not good enough, that there is no reason to hope, no reason to struggle, no reason to persist in a world in desperate need of resurrection. We are invited to live resurrection every day, living past the fear of what might happen and into the promise of what can happen if we chose to live differently.

This is not to say that despair will not find us. This is not to say that questions of why pain exists will not still be with us. It is only natural that we speak of the world as it is, and find

ourselves exasperated at those places where the stone is still firmly in place. We all have our baggage that we carry; we all have that which we would like to see transformed. Resurrection is one of those things that is both an event a process as things are made anew. How long our seemingly entombed realities persist? I cannot say. But know that even our heaviest loads can be transformed, if we can allow them to be.

We open ourselves to resurrection. Because the testimony of the women at the tomb is true, we can reject the untruths that power trumps compassion, that might creates its own justice, that the future holds only despair. Because they were not delirious in declaring the unbelievable, incomprehensible truth of a risen savior, we declare the death is never the final word, the final wall erected to shut us off forever, but is only the worst that the world can do, and the opening to the whole new world of God's reign and God's kingdom forever more.

We are resurrected to a new life, and empowered in the way of our Lord to tear down the walls that separate us from God, that separate us from each other, if we will but live in the reality of the new earth around us and with the vision of the new heaven before us. We, like Mary keep going back to see if it is true, and are invited to be amazed each and every time.

Easter has come. Easter is coming. Easter is already here. The tomb is empty. The walls have been destroyed. Christ is arisen, and the cosmos is forever new. May this be our invitation, our present reality, and promise forever more.

## Communion Language

This is the place of celebration, hope and promise. The risen Christ comes to us and meets us in the meal, revealing his risen power in the ordinary actions of sharing the table. The mundane means of nourishment have become the very symbols of God's loving promise that life is given to all who would partake of the meal. This is the meal of celebration that hope is given, that love wins, and God's kingdom knows no end.

Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed.

- Gluten free/sugar free option available
- We invite you to come forward and share in the meal. This is the table of celebration, of wide welcome, and as such we welcome all who would desire to come and participate
- Please come forward; take what you will and eat fully. Please leave your cups in the rows. We will collect and recycle them.

On the evening before his trials, and the day of his resurrection, Jesus gathered around table with friends. He took bread, blessed it and broke it. He has said: "My body is broken for you. Eat and open yourselves to my hope."

Similarly, he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to his friends. He said "This is my blood, shed as a symbol of covenant made, and life given

Let's Pray:

Life giving God,

You meet us where we are

With what we most need:

You resurrecting hope

That holds no reality as beyond your hope,

Beyond your healing,

Beyond your resurrection.

Open our eyes,

At this table and every table

To the gift of your presence.

This day and everyday.

Amen.