

**Easter Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2020**  
**Rev Karen Ross**

**Welcome:**

**Call to Worship:**

Hear the words of the angel at the empty tomb of Jesus, they're short, sweet and simple: *"He is not here. He has been raised!"* (Matt.28:6)

**Song: "Christ the Lord is Risen Today!",** words and music by Charles Wesley,  
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Through the resurrected Christ, death has lost its sting, and we are forgiven, restored and renewed to be in relationship with God and with others → peace.

**Notices:**

**No Zoom worship next week, Moderators service 9:00am Sunday**

**Reading:** (John 20:1-18)

*"Very early Sunday morning, before sunrise, Mary Magdalene made her way to the tomb. And when she arrived she discovered that the stone that sealed the entrance to the tomb was moved away! <sup>2</sup> So she went running as fast as she could to go tell Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved. She told them, "They've taken the Lord's body from the tomb, and we don't know where he is!"*

*<sup>3</sup> Then Peter and the other disciple jumped up and ran to the tomb to go see for themselves. <sup>4</sup> They started out together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup> He didn't enter the tomb, but peeked in, and saw only the linen cloths lying there. <sup>6</sup> Then Peter came behind him and went right into the tomb. He too noticed the linen cloths lying there, <sup>7</sup> but the burial cloth that had been on Jesus' head had been rolled up and placed separate from the other cloths.*

*<sup>8</sup> Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first went in, and after one look, he believed! <sup>9</sup> For until then they hadn't understood the Scriptures that prophesied that he was destined to rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup> Peter and the other disciple then left and went back to their homes.*

*<sup>11</sup> Mary arrived back at the tomb, broken and sobbing. She stooped to peer inside, and through her tears <sup>12</sup> she saw two angels in dazzling white robes, sitting where Jesus' body had been laid—one at the head and one at the feet!*

*<sup>13</sup> "Dear woman, why are you crying?" they asked.*

*Mary answered, "They have taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they've laid him."*

*<sup>14</sup> Then she turned around to leave, and there was Jesus standing in front of her, but she didn't realize that it was him!*

*<sup>15</sup> He said to her, "Dear woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?"*

*Mary answered, thinking he was only the gardener, "Sir, if you have taken his body somewhere else, tell me, and I will go and . . ."*

*<sup>16</sup> "Mary," Jesus interrupted her.*

*Turning to face him, she said, "Rabboni!" (Aramaic for "my teacher")*

*<sup>17</sup> Jesus cautioned her, "Mary, don't hold on to me now, for I haven't yet ascended to God, my Father. And he's not only my Father and God, but now he's your Father and your God! Now go to my brothers and tell them what I've told you, that I am ascending to my Father—and your Father, to my God—and your God!"*

*<sup>18</sup> Then Mary Magdalene left to inform the disciples of her encounter with Jesus. "I have seen the Lord!" she told them. And she gave them his message." (John 20:1-18)*

- For John, as for all the early Christians, the resurrection of Jesus was the immutable fact upon which their faith was based; and their faith depended on the testimony and the transformed behaviour of those who had actually encountered the resurrected Jesus.
- Jesus was not in God's eyes a condemned criminal as the Jewish leaders made Him out to be.
- The resurrection proved that he was blameless and therefore vindicated before God. And as such, He was the Messiah, the Son of God he claimed to be [1 Cor. 15:14-17].
- The resurrection of Christ isn't just something that happened **to** Jesus, it is something that happens **within** His disciples.
- What God created good, had been tarnished by evil. Now evil has been defeated, and the goodness of God lives within the believer and transforms the believer into the image of God that we were all created to bear. (Gen. 1:26-27)
- Those who are disciples of Jesus are given a new start in life. The old habits, attitudes, desires and behaviours that were more in line with selfishness, pride, anger, lust, envy, jealousy, greed, fear, rebellion; all of these things are forgiven, and we're given a new start.
- It's as though Jesus is a defibrillator that has been placed on our soul, and everything that had been tarnished and decayed by sin, everything that has slowed down or stopped the image of God radiating from us, everything that has limited the glory of God bursting forth out of humanity is now been overcome and we are being jump started into new life and given a new way of being.
- This is why Jesus stood before his disciples and said:

*"Are you weary, carrying a heavy burden? Then come to me. I will refresh your life, for I am your oasis. <sup>29</sup> Simply join your life with mine. Learn my ways and you'll discover that I'm gentle, humble, easy to please. You will find refreshment and rest in me. <sup>30</sup> For all that I require of you will be pleasant and easy to bear."* (Matt. 11:28-30)

- What Jesus offers is not hard, it's not restrictive, it's not boring – it's nothing like the implications of Covid 19.
- What Jesus offers is new, fresh, joy filled, peace filled, restful, refreshing, it is light, and it is life!
- What the resurrection of Jesus offers is a life that God intended for us.
- The resurrection of Jesus is more than an earthly event that happened 2000 years ago.
- It's more than a one-off thing that happened to a good man donkey's years ago.
- The resurrection of Jesus happens again and again and again whenever someone turns to Him and receives Him into their life.
- Whenever a human soul receives Jesus, Jesus comes to life – for the first time in them!
- And they come to life for the first time – in Him.
- The resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of the Christian journey.
- It is the place where it all begins.
- While the birth of Jesus is obviously the beginning of his earthly life, we can believe and follow his birth and His ministry and even His death on the cross. And while that may inspire and encourage and bless us.
- It is believing and receiving His resurrection life within us that gives us new life.
- This is what jump starts the believer into a new way of living and being and doing.
- It is more than a belief in Jesus, it is receiving His resurrection life in us.
- And this isn't just a one-off experience.
- This is an ongoing, unfolding, ever moving, ever increasing, experience – like an avalanche rolling down a hill, not a destructive movement, but rather, building a momentum of joy in the believer.
- Resurrection life is something that we can have every day.
- Every day we are invited to the empty tomb to see Jesus standing before us calling **our** name.

- In the reading this morning we heard that Jesus called Mary's name, and she cried out with joy to see Him.
- Today, and every day, Jesus calls **your** name.
- Today and every day, Jesus waits for you to pause long enough to hear Him call your name; and see Him standing with you.
- So, what is it like to hear Jesus call your name?
- Well, usually it's not an audible voice.
- If you're hearing an audible voice that's probably the TV going in the background, or your spouse talking to you – and if that's the case, best to listen to them 😊
- The voice of Jesus is different for everyone.
- For one, it might be a feeling in their heart; for another it might be an idea or thought that comes to mind; for another it might be an image or picture.
- I tend to hear the voice of Jesus, through either thoughts that come to me, or through images that emerge in my own mind's eye.
- If they produce a sense of joy and delight, then I know they're from Jesus.
- If they produce a fear, uncertainty, uneasiness, then I know it's either from me, or from the evil one.
- Hearing Jesus and trusting that I'm hearing Jesus is such a personal and powerful experience for me.
- I feel so loved and special and even important.
- And I want everyone to experience this.
- I want everyone to know that it's not so much about how good you are, or alternatively, how bad you might be. But rather, it's about the resurrected Jesus who has overcome all things that hinder you from knowing and receiving abundant life in Him.
- So if that's past experiences, or incomplete teaching, or the evil one trying to steal, kill and destroy the abundance God has for us; or, if it's our own self-doubt; or it could simply be that we're too active to pause and notice.
- Whatever might prevent us from knowing and experiencing the voice and the heart of Jesus has been defeated at the cross.

*"He cancelled out every legal violation we had on our record and the old arrest warrant that stood to indict us. He erased it all—our sins, our stained soul—he deleted it all and they cannot be retrieved! Everything we once were in Adam has been placed onto his cross and nailed permanently there as a public display of cancellation." (Col. 2:14)*

- Jesus put to death anything that opposes God – attitudes, behaviours, Satan, sin and death.
- Jesus took all of it upon himself and because He didn't participate in any of it, he had authority over it all, and He rose triumphant from the grave.
- The resurrection of Jesus is the beginning of new and abundant life in God.
- Because of the joy that bubbles forth, we can do nothing but tell others this good news:

*"Then Mary Magdalene left to inform the disciples of her encounter with Jesus. "I have seen the Lord!" she told them. And she gave them his message." (John 20:18)*

- This is the natural outflowing of a joyful experience of encountering Jesus.
- Mary couldn't wait to tell the other disciples.
- She couldn't hold it back it she tried.
- Mary had been following Jesus for several years. But her encounter with the resurrected Lord trumped every other experience of Him.
- She could not contain herself. The joy in her heart became the fuel in her soul and she shared the good news – that Jesus is not here, He is risen! 😊\_

- Would you like to know new and abundant life in Jesus? Would you like to hear His voice calling your name? Would you like to see Jesus standing with you in every circumstance? Do you want joy to bubble forth from you so that others will know that you've been with the Lord?
- I invite you to close your eyes, open your heart, and let's pray:

Jesus, I believe that you were born of the virgin Mary. I believe that you loved and healed many. I believe that you took upon yourself everything that stops me from radiating the glory of God. And I believe that you rose triumphant from the grave. I believe that you call my name and stand with me every day. Thank you, Jesus for who you are and what you have done for me, and for the entire world. I receive your resurrection life in me and ask you to open my ears and my eyes to hear and to see you in all circumstances. Fill me with your Holy Spirit so that joy bubbles forth. And Jesus, help me to share my new and abundant life with others.

And Lord, we pray that you would stir the hearts of all men and women and children throughout the world, those at home, at work, or in hospital. Those in rural and remote communities, in large cities, in developing countries in refugee camps, in the underground church, in the large multi-site church. Those in Muslim countries, Buddhist countries, Hindu countries. Those in leadership, those with mental health challenges, those who have families at home, those who are alone. Send your Spirit to open all hearts to receive a revelation of the resurrected Jesus who gives them new, eternal and abundant life.

Cause all people to receive you Jesus as their Lord and saviour. And empower them to follow and serve you. May revival sweep through the nations of the earth, and may you restore all the things of lasting value that have been diminished by the corona virus.

In the silence, we pray for our own families... bless them, protect them, provide for them and draw their hearts to you. Teach them your ways and show them your truths.

We pray for our own church family...continue to lead us and guide us through your Spirit and your written word as we continue to be alive in Christ, reach out in love and make disciples.

Take our tithes and our offerings as a sign of our commitment to your mission in this community. Bless what we give and use what we offer so that others may come to know new, eternal and abundant life in Christ. Amen.

#### **Benediction:**

**Go in peace and joy to love and serve the resurrected Lord.**

**Song: "King of Kings"**, words and music by Brooke Ligertwood, Jason Ingram, Scott Ligertwood,  
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