
EASTER WORSHIP

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Responsive Call To Worship

Leader: The tomb is dark, but empty.

People: The one you are looking for has overcome the darkness.

Leader: The stone has been rolled away.

People: The one you are looking for has overcome death.

Leader: The burial clothes are put aside.

People: The one you are looking for is alive!

Leader: Christ is Risen!

People: He is Risen Indeed!

Leader: Let us worship our Risen Savior!

Hymn: #243 – “Jesus Christ is risen today

Opening Prayer and Lord's Prayer

Leader 1:

God of Creation,
creating anew,
the silence is broken.
Like the women in the garden
we catch our breath,
wipe our tears,
and try to articulate our
experience with you.

Leader 2:

What words can describe
shadows fleeing from the tomb?
How can we tell of the morning
the world turned upside-down?
No mortal words will do.
Still, we must spread the news:
Christ is risen!

Leader 1:

Our knees are weak from running,
our voices tremble
on the edge of fearful joy.
Our eyes have seen the glory
of the Lord loosed upon the world!

Leader 2:

May every breath we take,
every word we utter,
everything we do,
witness to the truth
of Christ's resurrection.

Leader 1:

We continue to pray, using the words he taught us, saying together:

**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 debts,**

**As we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil. For thine is the
kingdom, the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Scripture: Luke 24: 1–12

¹On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.

²They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.

⁵In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' " ⁸Then they remembered his words.

⁹When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. ¹⁰It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles.

¹¹But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.

¹²Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

Reflection: NOT an "Idle Tale!"

Happy Easter, dear friends. Will you do something with me? Dating back to the earliest days of our faith, Christians have shared an ancient call-and-response. It's kind of the first creed of Christians everywhere.

It's simple. The call is "Christ is risen!" and the response is "He is risen, indeed!" The trick is not to say it like dour Presbyterians, but to put some life and joy and beauty and hope into it.

Because those are the things that this day brings to us.

So, let's give it a go: Christ is risen! (He is risen, indeed!)

Now we are ready to begin to dive into the amazing story of this resurrection day.

Luke tells us:

¹On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. ²They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

The great thing about this story is that it is so very ordinary. The women were simply going to take care of the next step in preparing the body for burial. If this were to take place today, it might have been the women going to a funeral home and being met by a funeral director who tells them that the body is suddenly gone.

That's the kind of situation they were in - they were not looking for a miracle, they were simply doing what you do when someone you cared for has died.

Following Jesus sometimes means doing the faithful, simple, next-step type of thing.

Some people will follow Jesus faithfully by moving to another country and becoming a missionary - big-gesture kind of following.

But some people will follow Jesus faithfully just where they are, just living their lives well.

Andrew Peterson, a Christian singer/songwriter, tells a story about his wife Jaime. They were at a conference together, and there was a time when they had moved into a small group for discussion.

The question they were discussing was, "What are you doing, in a practical way, to push back the darkness and shine Jesus' light in this world?"

As they went around the circle different people were giving different answers: a pastor talked about preaching the Word each Sunday and encouraging the faith of the people in his congregation, a theologian said that he was writing a book on the eschatology of...something something something (insert \$12 theological terms here), and Andrew, of course, was able to talk about songwriting and touring to share those songs with different audiences around the country.

As he listened to the answers given, he wondered what Jaime would say because she was a housewife and a part time piano teacher. When it came to

her turn, she said, “I’m pushing back raising three children of ours in the Lord.”

It stopped everyone because it was such a simple and real answer.

Sometimes following faithfully means simply doing the things that are part of life with an awareness of God’s presence.

That’s what the women were doing, early in the morning, going to the tomb to prepare the body. They were just being faithful in the small things. And, it turns out - because of THAT, because of their faithfulness, they got to witness the greatest moment in Jesus’ life.

Luke tells us:

⁴While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.

⁵In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?"

There are certain lines in the scriptures that just jump out. Every year at Christmas we hear the words: Mary treasured up all these things in her heart and thought deeply about them.

This question, “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” is a “jump out” line of Scripture. It’s such a simple question, but so very profound.

If we stare into the grave, we will not find our Lord and Saviour. He is not there. He is living and cannot be found among the dead.

Luke writes, the men in glowing white clothes continued speaking and said:

⁶He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' " ⁸Then they remembered his words.

Did you hear the word MUST in what the angels said?

He MUST be delivered into the hands of sinful men...it isn’t explicitly repeated in the next two clauses, but the way language works is that having said “must” once, it is implied in the next two clauses. He MUST be crucified. He MUST be raised again on the third day.

This was always the way it was going to work. This was the plan of God since the beginning.

This isn't a surprise to Heaven, as shocking as it is to Earth. Heaven knows that there is only one way for the power of sin and death to be broken forever, that all of this HAD to happen, in just this way, for God himself had ordained it.

Luke writes,

⁹When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. ¹⁰It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. ¹²Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

In this translation, the scripture reads: “their words seemed to them like nonsense.” In other translations it reads as, “But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.”

The women come back from the empty tomb, and they tell what has happened - because how could they possibly keep it to themselves? But the crazy thing is that the men don't believe it when they hear it. It seems to them an idle tale - just a bit of nonsense that the women are going on about.

There are countless stories of people who know that it is not an idle tale. Stories of missionaries who have traveled to far off places, stories of people who have been called into ministry, stories of song writers and theologians and stories of housewives who are raising their children to know Jesus.

The resurrection has power. Jesus is alive. He is risen.

And He is still grabbing hold of people two thousand years later. He is changing lives,

he is calling people to big-gesture follows, and ordinary-life follows, and it is all because this isn't an idle tale.

It is the power of life and love triumphing over death and sin, and it continues to change our world, in small and silly and huge and impressive ways.

Christ is risen!

He is risen, indeed!

Let us pray.

Hymn: #250 – “I danced in the morning /Lord of the dance”

Prayer

Liberator God, who cracks open the seed, the soil, and even the grave to bring forth life, we praise you for your wondrous Spirit. Glorious God of day's dawning, of light breaking, sun rising, life waking, of new possibilities beckoning us, we praise you for your re-creative movement in our world.

God of earth's renewal, of sunlight warming, bud sprouting, ground greening, justice bursting, of life trilling, chirping, buzzing, we praise you for your life-giving touch.

God of Jesus' rising, of Christ living, moving, working, of hope rising, joy swelling, love overwhelming, of new life blooming in and among us, we praise you for your resurrection power.

Today we bring to you all in us and in our world that has not yet been freed by the good news of Easter. Where fear reigns and stifles life, where sorrow seems endless and hope foolish, where violence threatens and peace is distant, where evil's hold is tenacious and mocks your loving ways, we pray that your victorious and transforming Spirit will break through.

We name before you now:

(Insert names of those who are known to your group that are going through a difficult time, OR hold a silence for people to name their own concerns, OR name some of the current news items that need prayer.)

Where any remain in tombs of grief, of loneliness, of cynical withdrawal, draw them closer to you. Where any walk in deadening ways, wanting, and having too much, giving and sharing too little, viewing one another with suspicion rather than compassion, bring your healing and new vision.

Work your miracle of life rising from the deadness the world imposes. Let loose the wonder of your eternal love from all that would entomb it. Life-giving God, raise even us, and make us all midwives of your hope. All this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our risen and reigning Lord, Amen.

Hymn: #410 – “Joyful, joyful we adore you”

Responsive Benediction

We have come from darkness and despair
to hope and joy.

We have been transformed by new life.

Go forth to witness and to testify to the message of hope
we have received this day.

Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

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