



Christ
is
Risen!

Alleluia

Easter Sunday Devotion

April 12, 2020

*Find a quiet place by
yourself or with another and
come to God.*

“...But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb...” – Luke 24:1

LIGHT A CANDLE AND SETTLE IN

As you begin your worship, remember that the women went to the tomb before the sun rose. If you are able, light a candle. Allow the flame to remind you that even in the darkest times, love and light find a way. Listen, if you are able, to “The Russian Easter Overture” by Rimsky-Korsakov

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXR0tloMmoo>



CALL TO WORSHIP

What a great day this is! Shout Alleluia!

Alleluia! (shout it out loud!)

Is that the best you can do? The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed! So shout it as though you mean it, with everything you have.

ALLELUIA! (again, shout it out loud!)

OPENING PRAYER

We repeat our Easter shouts of
surprise and joy
again and again,
for the news of your victory, O God,
over powers of death and evil
is news so startling
so amazing

so different from the news that bombards us day by day.

Beyond our comprehension
you startle us again and again
with resurrection life,
bringing grace and hope and joy.

You, in your risen power,
are shaping all our days,
and so we praise you,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

HYMN "Jesus Christ is Risen Today" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fn0pYGG-Ajg>

EASTER

365

Jesus Christ Is Risen Today

1 Je - sus Christ is ris'n to - day, Al - le - lu - ia!
2 Hymns of praise then let us sing, Al - le - lu - ia!
3 But the pains which he en - dured, Al - le - lu - ia!
4 Sing we to our God a - bove, Al - le - lu - ia!

our tri - um - phant ho - ly day, Al - le - lu - ia!
un - to Christ, our heav'n - ly king, Al - le - lu - ia!
our sal - va - tion have pro - cured; Al - le - lu - ia!
praise e - ter - nal as his love; Al - le - lu - ia!

who did once up - on the cross, Al - le - lu - ia!
who en - dured the cross and grave, Al - le - lu - ia!
now a - bove the sky he's king, Al - le - lu - ia!
praise him, all you heav'n - ly host, Al - le - lu - ia!

suf - fer to re - deem our loss. Al - le - lu - ia!
sin - ners to re - deem and save. Al - le - lu - ia!
where the an - gels ev - er sing. Al - le - lu - ia!
Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Ghost. Al - le - lu - ia!

Text: Latin carol, 14th cent., sts. 1-3; tr. J. Walsh, *Lyræ Davidica*, 1708, alt.;
Charles Wesley, 1707-1788, st. 4
Music: J. Walsh, *Lyræ Davidica*, 1708

EASTER HYMN
7777 and alleluia

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Emptier of tombs, on this morning of alleluias, we confess that at times we do not share in the joy of the resurrection but are caught in the worries of the world. We confess that we do not always live in the spirit of new life but remain discontent, grumbling and anxious. Forgive us for not sharing in the Good News. Forgive us when we find it more comfortable to worry and complain than to risk the joy and encouragement of new life in Christ. Call us back to your ways, O God, to seek hope and reconciliation, restoration and peace. In the name of the Risen Christ, we pray. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

The waters of our baptism remind us of the good news: The tomb is empty, sin is powerless, death is defeated forever. Jesus died for me. Jesus forgives me. Jesus loves me. Jesus is good to me. Alleluia!

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Psalm 118

¹ O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures forever!

² Let Israel say,
“His steadfast love endures forever.”

³ Let the house of Aaron say,
“His steadfast love endures forever.”

⁴ Let those who fear the LORD say,
“His steadfast love endures forever.”

⁵ Out of my distress I called on the LORD;
the LORD answered me and set me in a broad place.

⁶ With the LORD on my side I do not fear.
What can mortals do to me?

⁷ The LORD is on my side to help me;
I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.

⁸ It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to put confidence in mortals.

⁹ It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to put confidence in princes.

¹⁰ All nations surrounded me;
in the name of the LORD I cut them off!

¹¹ They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side;
in the name of the LORD I cut them off!

¹² They surrounded me like bees;
they blazed like a fire of thorns;
in the name of the LORD I cut them off!

¹³ I was pushed hard, so that I was falling,
but the LORD helped me.

¹⁴ The LORD is my strength and my might;
he has become my salvation.

¹⁵ There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous:

“The right hand of the LORD does valiantly;

¹⁶ the right hand of the LORD is exalted;
the right hand of the LORD does valiantly.”

¹⁷ I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of the LORD.

¹⁸ The LORD has punished me severely,
but he did not give me over to death.

¹⁹ Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the LORD.

²⁰ This is the gate of the LORD;
the righteous shall enter through it.

²¹ I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.

²² The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.

²³ This is the LORD’s doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.

²⁴ This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

²⁵ Save us, we beseech you, O LORD!
O LORD, we beseech you, give us success!

²⁶ Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD.
We bless you from the house of the LORD.

²⁷ The LORD is God,
and he has given us light.

Bind the festal procession with branches,
up to the horns of the altar.

²⁸ You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;
you are my God, I will extol you.

²⁹ O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever.

NEW TESTAMENT LESSON Matthew 28:1-10

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ² And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴ For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ This is my message for you.” ⁸ So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came

to him, took hold of 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.”

MEDITATION

Back in the day when we had Sunday School, one teacher asked her students, “What does Easter mean to you?” One young student responded by saying, “Easter means egg salad sandwiches for the next two weeks!”

OK, Easter means different things to different people, but to long time member of Forest Grove, Ella Adams, who died just three weeks ago, it meant something very different than egg salad sandwiches. The memory of one particular Easter during her early childhood helped her to gain an understanding of Easter. Easter came in the midst of Ella’s trek across Europe with her parents and two brothers during the early years of WWII. She and her family were fleeing the Ukraine. They made their exodus by walking across Europe taking few possessions as well as their family cow. It was a very difficult and often bleak period of Ella’s life.

As Easter approached, Ella’s mother felt that her family had to commemorate that occasion properly and with some semblance of respect for the day as well as “normalcy.” In her mind, this would allow for some joy to infiltrate their celebration. And so the story goes that Ella’s mother decided to make the huge sacrifice of selling or trading the family cow in order for everyone in the family to get a bath and for the children to each have a “sweet” or candy.

It was a meager celebration by most standards, but it left an indelible mark on Ella’s life. I wonder about Ella and her mother. I can’t help but wonder what kind of faith gets you through walking across Europe with your young family leaving all that you once knew behind except your cow and whatever you could carry? What kind of faith allows you to then let go of that one precious commodity for the sake of a bath and four pieces of candy in order to honor and celebrate God? What kind of faith sees you through six years in an internment camp for displaced people, which is where they ended up in Germany before coming to the US. What kind of faith takes you finally to a new country where they speak a different language and will look upon you as “different” and not necessarily in a good way? What kind of faith is this?

Most of us don’t know the experience of being displaced having to flee from home in order to find safety. Right now we have to flee *to* our homes in order to find safety. But we do know something about having our world turned upside down. We can relate to the need, the craving, for “normal.” How we all want a “normal” day – when children go to school outside of the house. How we want to go to work, to a restaurant, for a walk on the beach, join in singing “Happy Birthday” and help blow out candles. Some of us want to be able to have family come for a visit and others of us just want to get them out of the house! Some of us are longing for noise while others are desperately seeking silence. Universally we want to be settled into “normal.”

There was a hope, not all that long ago, although it seems like another lifetime ago, when we had hoped we would be back to normal by Easter. Our session had originally put a pin on April 1st hoping that would be the end date for this social distancing. When that day came, it didn’t even get much discussion. The pin was simply moved off the calendar entirely adopting a “to be determined” mentality.

So here we are – Easter and there is little “normal” in our lives and that includes this day. Normally Easter would look very different than this. Normally we would have started this day out with a potluck breakfast with more food than three congregations could eat. Normally there would be little girls in their Easter dresses and boys uncomfortable in their button downs and ties. Normally the choir would

bring us into worship with music that would take us to the stratosphere. Normally this sanctuary would be filled with people and I would scan the pews and see all of your wonderful faces. Normally this sanctuary would be filled with flowers as well and the smell would be what I imagine heaven to smell like. Normally.

But instead I am sitting here alone in a cold sanctuary staring into a computer screen where I can see only four people at a time. Instead I had a bagel and a glass of milk for breakfast. Instead children are still wearing pajamas or jeans and a t-shirt or at least something comfortable. Instead I'm sitting here with just a few flowers. This is a new normal. I ask the same question of this new normal as I asked of Ella's family's new normal. What kind of faith is this that allows us to live into this new "normal" that isn't anything like what we have known or even would desire and still come together to celebrate Easter?

I think that kind of faith is what prompted those women along with Peter and John to go to the tomb that first Easter morning. How they had hoped that day would look much, much different than the reality to which they awoke. That morning, that Easter morning, wasn't at all what was expected and it certainly wasn't normal, at least as far as their lives were concerned. Just a week ago when they were hailing Jesus as the "One who comes in the name of the Lord," the new king in the line of David, they certainly didn't think they would be walking in a funeral procession. But the following seven short days included a whirlwind of significant events with life-changing consequences. When they woke up that morning on the first day of the week, the furthest thing from their mind was that God had started something brand new, shattering all expectations and creating a new "normal." And yet they got up and went to the place where their dead Messiah was laid to rest.

It was probably with a whole lot of emotions and thoughts that filled their mind as they braved the early morning to go to the tomb. Certainly they went there in order to mourn. Jesus died the day before the Sabbath and so when Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimethia placed his body in the tomb, his loyal followers had to quickly return home in order to observe the Sabbath. But now, they could no longer wait. Those followers hustled towards the tomb ready to sit shiva, to wail and weep, to bring memories of Jesus' life and their loss back to life with their tears and loud cries. It was the last thing they could do for Jesus. It was the normal thing to do.

But when they got to the tomb, normal went out the window when the earthquake hit and the tomb was opened by an angel, no less. Matthew tells us that the first words that are spoken are those four magic words that meant something big was up -- "Do not be afraid." Why wouldn't they be afraid? Besides the earthquake, the angel's appearance isn't just striking -- with a face like lightning and clothing whiter than Tide could ever hope to get them -- but is actually terrifying. Hence the guards at the tomb immediately faint in terror.

No wonder those women are afraid. And no wonder the angel therefore first speaks words of comfort and courage. "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised." Of course, it doesn't stop there, after the fear, and after the words of courage, comes a command: "Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you."

And they do. They come and see and then run and tell. And Matthew describes their obedience as a mixture of "fear and joy."

David Lose suggests that this is how we live our lives, in fear and joy. We fear what may happen to our children in a dangerous world; joy at the blessing they are to us and, we pray, they will be to the world. Fear of whether we will have a job in the weeks and months to come; joy at the colleagues and

clients that have surrounded us in the past and many are still with us even at a distance. Fear about the fate of a loved one struggling with illness; joy in the gift that person has been to us. Fear about the future amid problems both national and global; joy in the present moment surrounded by those we love and that we can stay connected with new technology or the old fashioned way by telephone or letter. Fear about our world that has changed dramatically and may never be the same; joy in the blossoming of spring that comes nonetheless. There is also fear about the future of our congregation and church; joy in our call to proclaim the gospel – and we still do, maybe now more than ever.

The angel tells the women, “Do not be afraid” even as they announce the resurrection. It tells us that the resurrection doesn’t take away all their fear. There was still much to be fearful about – the Romans, the Jewish authorities. I’ve said it before, Jesus’ resurrection doesn’t erase all the problems of the world. Rather, it enables them to keep faith amid their fears, to do their duty and share their good news in spite of their anxiety. This is the very definition of courage. And, I agree with David Lose that courage is precisely what Easter is about.

You may have heard about a church that was still held worship services where hundreds of people attended. One of the participants was asked about why she wasn’t following social distancing. Her explanation was that she wasn’t afraid because she was covered in the blood of Jesus.

I’d like to suggest that we are all covered in the blood of Jesus sacrifice, but it isn’t a magic shield that will keep things like COVID-19 from infecting us or some other harmful substance or circumstance. There are still things out there to be fearful of but even when we stand face to face with such things, the blood of Jesus will keep us from being destroyed by it.

Paul said in his letter to the Romans, 8:31ff, “What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else... Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

This is the kind of faith that allowed Ella’s Mom to make the trek across Europe with her young family and trust when she sold the family cow to honor Easter. This is the faith that allows us to face whatever adversity comes our way, COVID-19 or something else, some other illness or hardship.

The tomb was empty. Death, destruction does not have the final word. “Death has been swallowed up in victory! Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” (1 Corinthians 15:54) This is our normal. On this Easter, when so much is different, I can tell you that one thing remains the same – the power and love of God in Christ Jesus, more powerful than anything that may come our way.

As I sit here and look around at all that seems so different, it still looks and smells like heaven to me because we are together and there is clear and certain evidence that Jesus is alive – here in this cold sanctuary and in your warm homes. The Holy Spirit is still extending to us the gift of life – not life as we could expect, but it is the goodness, the absolute goodness of life with God – even now and forever.

PRAYER by Ann Siddall, and posted on the website of the Stillpoint Spirituality Centre
O God, with faces touched by the light of a new day,
and hearts warmed by our prayers and praises,

we come before you to pray
for the needs of our world.

Into the light of Easter morning
we raise those who are struggling with illness,
with despair over their lives, or with
the breakdown of relationships.
May the light of Christ shine upon them.

Into the light of Easter morning,
we bring those places in our world
where war, violence, poverty and need
are the experiences of everyday life.
(These places may be named)
May the light of Christ shine upon them.

Into the light of Easter morning,
we bring the headline news of this weekend
(this may be named):
we hold in our hearts the pain
of those suffering violence, bereavement or conflict.
May the light of Christ shine upon them.

And into the light of Easter morning
we bring ourselves, the private struggles,
the heart's yearnings, the hidden dreams,
the unfulfilled potential.
May the light of Christ shine upon us.
Amen.

BENEDICTION

Christ is with us in this place.
Alleluia!
Christ goes with us into the world.
Alleluia!
Go now in peace. Christ is risen!
Risen indeed! Alleluia!

I commend to you the following music: "Hallelujah Chorus" by G.F. Handel
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BBZ7AfZR9xs>
and "Toccata from Symphony no. 5" by Charles-Marie Widor
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DKejfYzB3ak>

CHILDREN'S LESSON (of whatever age)

Theme: Easter

Objectives:

- celebrate the good news of Easter
- learn different Easter traditions
-

Materials:

- Eggs
- Egg dye or make your own
-

1. Retell the story of Easter as found in John 20:1-9 using the following script with motions:

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark,

Make stretching motions and yawn.

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

Put your hands on your forehead as if peering into an opening.

So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said,

Run in place.

“They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!”

Find a partner, put your hands on your partner's shoulders, and gently shake them.

So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb.

Make a circle with everyone, and quietly run in place.

Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in.

Stop running, and bend over like you are looking into the tomb.

Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb.

Jump forward.

He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head.

Scratch your head like you are wondering about something.

The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside.

Shake hands with a partner.

He saw and believed.

Jump up and down, waving your arms.

Prayer:

Dear God, we wonder what Mary Magdalene, Peter and John thought when they got to the empty tomb. Thank you for bringing Jesus back to life. We thank you that he lives forever. He loves us so

much, and now he wants to be our Savior. Help us follow him every day. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

2. Explore Egg Traditions

The egg has been a tradition of Easter for many years. The egg reminds us of the tomb where Jesus was placed after his death. The fact that the baby chick breaks out of the egg reminds us of Jesus coming out of the closed tomb at his resurrection. Consider these egg traditions from around the world:

Jewish tradition—the egg is a part of the Passover Seder meal, representing hope and a new life after escaping from slavery.

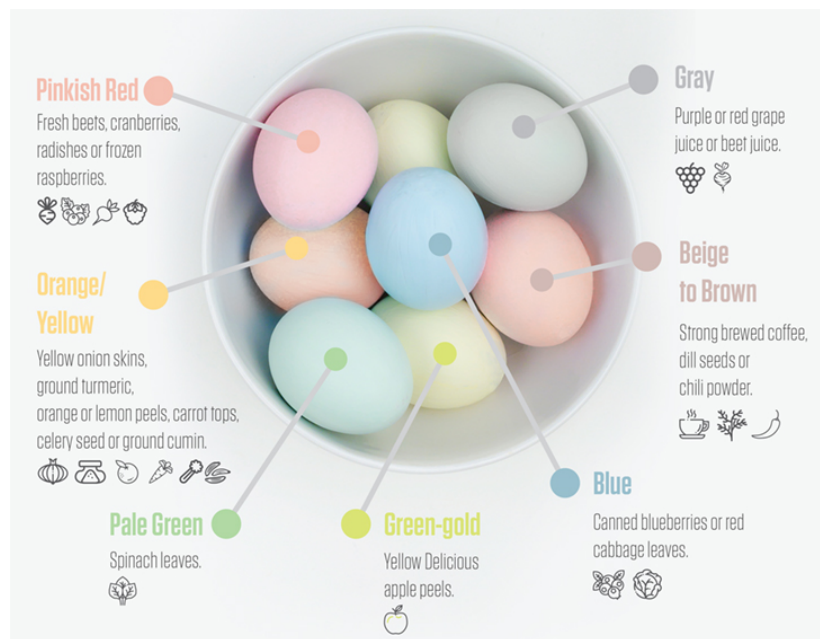
Chinese tradition—a red egg is sent to friends when a baby is one month old. This is an invitation to a celebration feast for the child's birth.

Scottish tradition—an egg is placed beneath the seeds that are sown in the fields in the spring to symbolize a good harvest and new life from the seed.

Ukrainian tradition—giving a decorated egg symbolizes giving a gift of love to that person.

German tradition—when you break the shell of an Easter egg, you allow the blessing of Easter to enter your home.

- Dye eggs using prepackaged dye or make your own:



DIRECTIONS

1. To make naturally dyed eggs, **TOSS** your choice of a handful – or two or three – of one of the ingredients listed into a saucepan. Use your own judgment about quantity. This is an art – not a science!
2. **ADD** about a cup of water for each handful of your chosen ingredient, so the water comes at least an inch above your dye materials. **BRING** mixture to boiling, reduce the heat

and **SIMMER** from 15 minutes up to an hour, until the color is the shade you want. Keep in mind that the eggs will dye a lighter shade. **REMOVE** the pan from the heat.

3. Through cheesecloth or a fine sieve, **STRAIN** the dye mixture into a small bowl that's deep enough to completely cover the eggs you want to dye. **ADD** 2 to 3 teaspoons of white vinegar for each cup of dye liquid.
4. With a spoon or wire egg holder, **LOWER** the eggs into the hot liquid. Let the eggs stand until they reach the desired color. For emptied eggshells, stir or rotate for even coloring. With a slotted spoon or wire egg holder, **REMOVE** the eggs to a rack or drainer. Allow the eggs to dry thoroughly. Naturally dyed eggs require longer soak time in the dye solution for the color to take hold (overnight will give the best, most saturated color).

EASTER MAZE

