

4/5/26
Easter Sunday
For Group Meetings from March 29th – April 4th

OUR MISSION: As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

Prayer of the Day: O God, you gave your only Son to suffer death on the cross for our redemption, and by his glorious resurrection you delivered us from the power of death. Make us die every day to sin, that we may live with him forever in the joy of the resurrection, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER:

Share: How did last week's scripture (Matthew 21:1-11) work in your life this week?

Mission:

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

Hear: Matthew 28:1-10

Explore Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. Who are the women who go to the tomb and what are they expecting to find?
2. What details does Matthew include about the earthquake and the angel?
3. What does Jesus say when he meets the women?

Connect Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. Where have you seen new life recently?
2. Where do you see fear and joy mixed together in your own life right now?
3. Who in your life needs to hear a word of hope or resurrection right now?

Memorize this verse: "Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.'" (Matthew 28:10) Who or what helps you when you are afraid?

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:

Obey: During this week follow through on your intentions.

Meditate: Meditate on Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24. How does this speak into your life?

Reflect: What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

Notes for ChristCare leaders:

Here we are again. The climax and conclusion of Lent and Holy Week, the pinnacle of the Christian year, the very peak of the Christian story and, we confess, world history itself. While I believe that each of those statements is true, I also believe each is insufficient. Too often we see Easter as a conclusion, when I suspect that in the Gospels and, for that matter, in the early Christian community, the resurrection of Jesus was meant to be only the beginning. The very fact that we have Matthew's scene of the resurrection supports that assertion. Matthew's gospel stays closest to Mark's, which makes his additions and changes all the more interesting. That is, while he apparently felt a great affinity for and loyalty to Mark's story, he nevertheless felt it needed something more, something a little different. And so Jesus' resurrection is accompanied by an earthquake, guards positioned at the tomb to prevent Jesus' disciples stealing his body and claiming resurrection fall to the ground in a fear-induced coma, the divine messenger is more dramatically angelic and impressive, the women actually go and do what the angel tells them to do, and Jesus appears to them along the road of their obedience. Each of these additions extends the earlier story of Mark in order to attend to concerns of the specific community for whom Matthew was writing. And the willingness to adapt that earlier story to present needs and circumstances isn't just an interesting historical detail or even a helpful interpretive lens through which to read the scene. It is also an example set for those called to proclaim the truth and meaning of Christ's resurrection ever since. We are called to stay faithful to the earlier accounts of the resurrection precisely by retelling it in a way that addresses the immediate circumstances and lives of our present-day hearers.

With this in mind, I want to focus on two elements of Matthew's story that spoke to me. First, it struck me that one of Matthew's additions is that the women, when confronted by the divine messenger and the news that Christ has been raised, do not just flee the tomb in fear and silence, as in Mark (1:8), but "left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy" (28:8). Isn't that a wonderful reminder that fear and joy are not opposites but, as with doubt and faith, can be experienced at the same time and might be inseparable? Jesus' resurrection does not spell an end to fear for those who follow him but rather makes it possible to experience joy amid what might otherwise be crippling fear. Resurrection doesn't simply answer or end problems but rather creates something new. Second, it struck me that after the note of comfort – "do not be afraid" – there is invitation, even command – "come and see... go and tell." Comfort we associate with the Gospel, but command? Note, however, that this command is not a burden to be accomplished but a gift to be opened and delighted in. The resurrection of Christ creates the possibility to do spontaneously and joyfully what otherwise would be impossible. The Christian answer to fear is not simply comfort but also invitation to a life of courage. That participation and purpose are some of the gifts of the resurrection. That we are not simply longing to hear "it will be okay," but "here is the life and work God is giving you". In this spirit, we are sent out to meet the challenges before us with confidence and to address the problems we will encounter with courage and joy, knowing that the God who raised Jesus from the dead is not done yet. Not done with the world God loves so much, and not done with us.

In short, Easter isn't over. That resurrection wasn't a once-and-done historical aberration but rather reflects the dynamic and ongoing nature and work of the God we meet in Christ. Karl Barth once said that "the goal of human life is not death, but resurrection." That does not mean that death is not a fearsome reality, only that it does not have the final word. Perhaps this Easter we can be reminded that the promise of the resurrection is not simply what God has done, but what God is still doing, still leading us forward into new life and possibility and forgiveness and love. Easter is not over, it is on-going, and perhaps the best response for us 21st century Christians to make to that good news is the same as the 1st century response, "Christ is risen, indeed!"

Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

Traditional version:

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, the power,
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Contemporary version:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen