

NORTH MAIN SERMON EASTER SUNDAY APRIL 5, 2026

John 20:1-18

Early in the morning of the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. ²She ran to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they’ve put him.” ³Peter and the other disciple left to go to the tomb. They were running together, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and was the first to arrive at the tomb. ⁵Bending down to take a look, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he didn’t go in. ⁶Following him, Simon Peter entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there. ⁷He also saw the face cloth that had been on Jesus’ head. It wasn’t with the other clothes but was folded up in its own place. ⁸Then the other disciple, the one who arrived at the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. They didn’t yet understand the scripture that Jesus must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to the place where they were staying.

¹¹Mary stood outside near the tomb, crying. As she cried, she bent down to look into the tomb. ¹²She saw two angels dressed in white, seated where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and one at the foot. ¹³The angels asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?” She replied, “They have taken away my Lord, and I don’t know where they’ve put him.” ¹⁴As soon as she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she didn’t know it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?” Thinking he was the gardener, she replied, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him and I will get him.”

¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabbouni” (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Don’t hold on to me, for I haven’t yet gone up to my Father. Go to my brothers and sisters and tell them, ‘I’m going up to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene left and announced to the disciples, “I’ve seen the Lord.” Then she told them what he said to her.

Luke 24:1-12 -- Jesus Has Risen

24 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. ⁵ In 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? ⁶ He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷ ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’ ” ⁸ Then they remembered his words.

⁹ When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. ¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. ¹² Peter, 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.

The Word of God..

Each church has their own tradition of worship settings for Easter Sunday. Today, we celebrate Jesus’ day of resurrection! But before we could celebrate, we needed to grieve. In fact, we spent this entire past week that we call Holy Week mourning the hardships Jesus went through, his own grief, the misconceptions, guilt, and pain of disciples who didn’t understand him, and Jesus’ excruciating death. Jesus’ resurrection had been the focus of his ministry and teaching throughout his time with his disciples. Not only has he tried to explain the concept to his disciples, but again and again, Jesus has brought people back from places of pain, illness, blindness, deafness, ignorance, doubt, grief, shame, guilt, and even death and lifted them into a place of health, wholeness, life, and a

new start. The core of the resurrection story is generally the same. If you combined all the core details together, the Easter story would go something like .. On the first day of the week at sunrise, Mary Magdalene arrived at Jesus' tomb. She knew that he would be there. Only Jesus was not there! Jesus had arisen from the dead.

We all know the story. Jesus had come to Bethany to the home of Martha and Mary because it was close to Jerusalem where Jesus would go to die. Mary and Martha asked him to come because their brother Lazarus had died. Jesus felt deeply for them and so he went to the tomb where he was buried and told Lazarus to come out and he raised him from the dead. Knowing that Jesus was in town and hearing about this, people came from miles around to have him heal them from whatever was wrong with them. That night there was a dinner party being held before the Passover feast. Mary and Martha hosted the party. The next day was the triumphant entry into Jerusalem. They thought the King was coming. He was the King, but not the kind they were expecting. We joyously joined in Palm Sunday and the triumphant march into Jerusalem.

From our Scripture readings for today we can again hear of the horrors of that day. John tells us how they arrested Jesus..but Jesus prayed for his disciples..not for himself, but for them... Easter morning changes everything. Everything changed with that event that day and now the world will never be the same. Easter is a new start, a new creation. The problem is that not everyone saw it. You know how it is with amazing things. If you didn't see it, if you weren't there, it is hard to capture the experience. Consider what the story did to those who were there. What if we were to consider the impact of the story on those who were witnesses and lived their lives bearing witness to that story? Mary saw it. Jesus' Mother..Can you imagine..Mary's life had been so full of promises. She remembered that night not so long ago when the star led the shepherds and the wise men to the cradle where her baby son was born..everyone worshipped him, but no one more than Mary.. Watching Jesus' wisdom grow, miracles multiply, believers banded and disciples chosen. She harbored it all in her heart as she obeyed the working will of God. Her heart knew that Jesus was the Son of God. She didn't know that He would be tortured, put to death on a Cross.

And then this final day came and it was hard to remember the wonders of the past as Mary witnesses her Son nailed to the Cross. She knew now what he had been saying was true. He is raised upon the cross, pinned upon the lifeless wood in agony, enduring for the love of the Father even death on a cross. Today we can't help but to reflect on the suffering Mary must have endured. When she watched her Son carry a heavy wooden Cross up the hill of Golgotha, did she have the deepest desire to pick up the back of the wooden beam, and take the burden from him.. Even as the Cross bears down all its weight on a heart of a Mother, she didn't give in to its temptations even though she was overwhelmed with sadness and fear for her Son. She really wanted to run but he was her Son and she could not leave.

“From noon onward, darkness came over the whole land . . . The immense darkness of sorrow flows from Mary’s heart into the land and beyond, into heaven itself. And yet, he is able to speak to his Mother even with the horrible death that was happening to him. The lifeless body of her Son is placed in Mary’s arms. Mary is there when Jesus is laid in the tomb. A large stone is rolled over the entrance. Her Son is sealed away in darkness. Mary must go home now after the tomb is sealed. Mary tried to sleep that night, but she knew it would be a long night. The disciples felt so worthless. They could do nothing to help her. The death on the cross was indescribable. Mary had never seen anything like it. Watching her baby son endure death this way she did not know that such pain existed. And the two men who were crucified with him. He worried about them more than himself. He cried for them in their pain. When they asked to be forgiven for their sins, Jesus prayed with them. Mary had suffered right along with them. Who could she rely on now. It was understood that the one Jesus loved the most would take care of Mary. John was Jesus’ closet friend. She leaned on him and he was glad for it. The next day, after a sleepless night she knew it was her time to go to the tomb-- --just to be there, near his tomb just one more time. In the stillness, in the darkness, Mary made her way to the place of death. Probably carrying spices to anoint Jesus’ body. She had to do what was right. She had to do this one last thing for her Son..bury his body properly. The burial was so hurried. They were not allowed to finish the preparation of the Lord’s body, and they hastened to bring him to the tomb for his burial. They wanted to complete the burial ritual, and so Mary decided that early in the morning, before others awoke, she would take the spices and go to the tomb. But when she got there, she saw that the stone had been rolled

away. She ran back to tell Simon Peter and the others about this. When they heard the news, they ran to the tomb. John reached the tomb before Peter and he looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not see Jesus' body. He didn't go into the tomb, but when Peter arrived he entered the tomb and he also saw the linens and noticed that the cloth which had been placed on Jesus' head had been rolled up in a place by itself. John then entered the tomb and they both were mystified. Had someone taken the body? What had they done with it? Their questions unanswered, they went back to that upper room in which they had spent a last meal with the Lord. Mary could not do the last thing for him, to complete his burial. She looked into the tomb to see for herself what the others had seen. Inside the tomb sat two angels in white, one at the place where Jesus' head had laid and the other where His feet had been. "Woman, why are you weeping?" Why? Did they not know? "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she turned around, there was the gardener, and he asked "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" "If you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." And then He spoke to me.....He said, "Mary!"

There, before her eyes, stood the Risen Lord. Mary! Mary! And then instructed her to go and deliver his incredible message: "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

The story is about a woman who came with a broken heart to the tomb just before dawn and saw the beginning of a transformed life. The story of the risen Christ is also about how he hung around the garden, so Mary wouldn't be alone in her confusion and fear. The same as he is for all of us today.

"He is Risen Indeed.. I say to you this morning: CHRIST IS RISEN.. He is Risen Indeed.

Resurrection is the joy of knowing that something we thought was lost to us has been found. Resurrection is also about hope. Hope comes in many forms and the grace of God comes to us at unexpected moments and in unexpected ways. Remember that it's in the darkness that the dawn of morning light comes. It's in the darkness that we discover the stone has already been rolled away and the love of God has been let loose in the

world. This is the day of brightness and hope! A day of new light for the World. This amazing grace that God bestows upon each of us, this miracle of new life, becomes ours today.. This is the gift that Jesus gives to us, that because he lives, so can we, does wondrous things for us! The resurrection of Jesus is not the ending of the story. Over and over God's beautiful world is resurrected to glorious new life on Easter morning. Easter morning is a day that we can never forget. Jesus is the way and the truth and the life. We are witnesses today, for just as surely as Christ was raised from the dead over 2000 years ago. The final step on the journey is today... Today we will celebrate that final step with Holy Communion. This is one of the gifts that Jesus gave us before he died.