

Sunday, Apr 12, 20  
EASTER: The Stone Rolled Away

**Thought For Meditation:**

There have been times/when, after long on my knees/ in a cold chancel,  
a stone has rolled/from my mind, and I have looked/in and seen the old questions lie/  
folded and in a place/by themselves, like the piled/graveclothes of love's risen body.

R.S. Thomas from his poem "The Answer"

**A Time of Greeting:**

**Call To Worship:**

Voice 1: Christ is Risen!

**All: Christ is Risen indeed!**

**Hymn: "Jesus Christ is Risen Today (VU 155, verse 1)**

**Jesus Christ is risen today, Hallelujah!**

**Our triumphant holy day, hallelujah!**

**Who did once, upon the cross, hallelujah!**

**Suffer to redeem our loss. Hallelujah!**

Litany of The Returning of the Light

Voice 1: "All will be well in the end.

If all is not well, then it is not the end."

(with apologies to Julian of Norwich and John Lennon)

(light first candle)

Voice 2: Jesus' Resurrection was a long time coming.

(light second candle)

Voice 3: Jesus' enemies were sure he was gone for good.

(light third candle)

Voice 1: Jesus' friends were afraid he was gone for good.

(light fourth candle)

Voice 2: But the power of new life broke through their false certainties and their genuine fears.

(Light fifth candle)

**People: How much patience must it have taken, for Jesus to let his friends discover him, alive, amongst them?**

Voice 3: When they had gone to the tomb, they found the stone rolled away; grave clothes, but no body.

**People: He is not here! He is Risen!**

(light sixth candle)

Voice 2: When they returned home, their friends asked them what they had found.

Voice 3: We found nothing. And *Everything!*

**People: We found nothing. And *Everything!***

(light the Christ candle)

Voice 1: Let us pray:

**Even from the empty tomb, you call us to return to you.**

**Even from the empty tomb, you offer us forgiveness, a chance to start again.**

**Even from the empty tomb, you make room for us to stand.**

**Even from the empty tomb.**

**Choral response: (VU 144 – sung joyfully!)**

**Were you there when he rose up from the grave?**

**Were you there when he rose up from the grave?**

**Oh-oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.**

**Were you there when he rose up from the grave?**

**Scripture:** Luke 24: 1-12

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body.

While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them.

The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, ‘Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.’

Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe the them.

But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

**Reader:** The Word of the Lord.

**People:** Thanks be to God.

**An Easter Dialogue:**

**JANE:** I must say, that the season of Lent was very timely this year. The fear and unease and confusion that Jesus and his followers experienced, that last week of his life, we also are experiencing, in unprecedented ways, these last weeks of pandemic.

But Easter morning, well, that is a different story.

**KELLY:** Easter traditionally is a morning of unbridled joy and celebration, truly the high point of our faith.

Our voices become hoarse from shouts of Alleluia!

The music we sing changes from a minor key, to major. Mournful notes are replaced by trumpets and drums and joy-filled shouts of praise.

Except this year, it feels premature to celebrate, doesn't it?

**JANE:** There are attempts to put the best foot forward, to promote the good we see, like the numbers of those who have recovered, the kind ways people are helping each other get through this isolation, the slowing of the rates of those contracting covid-19, but there is no sense yet, that we have turned the corner on this. It is way too soon to throw a party.

**KELLY:** There are even those in the church who have suggested that we delay the celebration of Easter until the quarantine is lifted, until we can be physically together, until we have good news to shout out together!

But Emily Heath, a colleague in the United Church of Christ, reminds us what Easter – the FIRST Easter – was really like:

*"The first Easter didn't happen at a church. It happened outside of an empty tomb, while all the disciples were sequestered in a home, grief-stricken and wondering what was going on. So, we're all going to be keeping things pretty Biblical this Easter." ..The Rev. Dr. Emily C. Heath*

**JANE:** One of the common elements of the resurrection stories across the gospels is that no one expects the resurrection. Even though Jesus told them over and over again that he would rise from the dead, still, none of the disciples shout "Hallelujah" when they hear that the tomb is empty. And absolutely no one says, "I knew it – just like he said!"

**KELLY:** Do you ever wonder whether we would have believed the report of the women returning from the empty tomb?

**JANE:** A couple of weeks ago, Dave and Nancy Shirley recommended a Netflix movie to us. It was called "A.D. – Kingdom and Empire".

In it, those who first went to the tomb, came back to the house where the rest of the disciples were sequestered. Voices trembling with fear, and with hope, the disciples asked them,

"What did you find?"

To which they simply replied, "

"We found nothing. And we found everything."

**KELLY:** "We found nothing. And we found everything."

The women had not gone to the tomb in hopes of finding Jesus alive. They had gone with embalming spices. They'd gone to tend to his battered and lifeless

body, according to their tradition.

And yet, when they arrived they found that stone rolled away, and Jesus' body gone. They were presented with a new possibility. One that they hardly dared to believe was possible.

~the slightest possibility of the unthinkable broke into that tomb,  
broke into their sealed up hearts, like a piercing shaft of light. A shaft of Hope.

**JANE:** It is an act of faith, us staying a hockey stick of distance from each other. It is a hard act of faith, for businesses and schools to close their doors, for us to curtail our shopping, for us to not go to Ottawa next week to celebrate Raphaël's second birthday, for ....?

**KELLY:** Perhaps, this year, our Resurrection Hope is expressed most deeply, in what we are NOT doing. In our *not gathering*, in our staying home, in our nothingness, we are hoping to bring about Easter:  
To see, some day soon, the human family rising, rising out of isolation; rising out of illness, rising to New Life.  
I know. It was too much for those first disciples to believe, too.

**JANE:** But though our doors are shut, still, the Light comes in through our windows. Hope has a way of entering. Unbidden. But not unwelcome. In this odd Easter, in this strange season of nothingness, may you find.... everything! Amen.

**HYMN:** VU 166 Joy Comes with the Dawn <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ylehW0P3kYE>  
Chorus:

Joy comes with the dawn;  
joy comes with the morning sun;  
joy springs from the tomb  
and scatters the night with her song,  
joy comes with the dawn.

1. Weeping may come;  
weeping may come in the night,  
when dark shadows cloud our sight.  
Chorus:

2. Sorrow will turn,  
sorry will turn into song,  
and God's laughter make us strong.  
Chorus:

3. We will rejoice,  
we will rejoice, and give praise,  
to the One who brings us grace.  
Chorus:

**Invitation to the Table:**

There's something about a table, isn't there?  
That draws us in, beckons us to come,  
Because everything's ready...  
But we can't start until everyone's here.  
So as we invite you to this table,  
I recognize that you are inviting us to yours:  
Your kitchen table?  
A bedside table?  
A TV tray in your living room?  
A coffee table in the den?  
A children's table in the family room?  
No matter, for they are all holy.  
And Jesus welcomes us to all of them, saying  
Blessed be this table and all tables,  
As we share in this Easter meal together!

**\*A New Creed (p. 918)**

**We are not alone,  
we live in God's world.  
We believe in God:  
who has created and is creating,  
who has come in Jesus,  
the Word made flesh,  
to reconcile and make new,  
who works in us and others  
by the Spirit.  
We trust in God.  
We are called to be the Church:  
to celebrate God's presence,  
to live with respect in Creation,  
to love and serve others,  
to seek justice and resist evil,  
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,  
our judge and our hope.  
In life, in death, in life beyond death,  
God is with us.  
We are not alone. Thanks be to God.**

**\*Hymn: Eat this Bread (VU 466) sung in repetition...**

**Eat this bread, drink this cup;  
come to me and never be hungry.  
Eat this bread, drink this cup;  
trust in me and you will not thirst.**

## **THE GREAT THANKSGIVING**

J: We give you thanks, God of the ages; and God of *this* particular time and place.  
God of the empty tomb and the fullness of life.

God of community gathered close, and community scattered.

Pour out your Spirit upon us, O God, as we eat and drink and remember, for this is how we proclaim the mystery of our faith:

***The tomb is empty: he is not there!***

***For Christ is risen,***

***Christ is risen indeed!***

***Alleluia!***

K: Here at the table we are gathered and held in your love.

For this is the Table of Jesus- who lived a life of radical hospitality. He shows us still, even in the midst of pandemic, that life is a holy gift, and meant to be shared.

And so, in these days of isolation, we tell one another the story, so we remember what it is to gather together at table:

It was on the same night in which he would be betrayed. And he gathered with his beloved friends in an Upper Room. And there he took the bread, and he blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to his friends, saying:

### **Bread/cracker/chip, etc.**

K: This is my body.

J: The body that knows what it is to long for embrace, though needing to refrain.

K: The body that knows what it is like to be afraid.

J: that knows what it is like to be loved out of its fear.

**ALL: what it is like to be alone and in pain and no one to visit.**

J: The body that knows what it is like to labour without enough protection.

K: This is the body that knows life in all its sorrow and joy, its emptiness and fullness.

**ALL: This is the body of Christ.**

K: Take, break, and eat....

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### **Juice/Water/etc.**

J: And after supper he took the cup of wine, and he gave it to his friends saying:

*This is my life's blood, the new covenant poured out for all, and all for love's sake [or for the forgiveness of sins]. Whenever you drink this, this do in remembrance of me.*

J: This is the cup of his life...

K: The cup that Jesus lifted and shared;

**ALL: and the cup he had to drink alone;**

K: The cup that was poured out on the streets and hillsides and night time gardens.

J: Poured out like fragrant oil, and tears and scattered palms,

K: Poured out for the faithful and the feckless, for you and for me.

**ALL: This is the cup of his life poured out for us all in love.**

J: Taste and see that God is good.

-----*We Share the Feast*-----

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION (unison):**

**We give thanks that bread broken brings wholeness;**

**that wine poured out replenishes;**

**that time spent with the Risen Christ and one another – even when we gather electronically - is both gift and grace.**

**Alleluia and Amen!**

**Closing Song: “Why Walk When You Can Fly” by Mary Chapin Carpenter**

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

In this world there's a whole lot of trouble, baby

In this world there's a whole lot of pain

In this world there's a whole lot of trouble, but

A whole lot of ground to gain

Why take when you could be giving?

Why watch as the world goes by?

It's a hard enough life to be living

Why walk when you can fly?

In this world there's a whole lot of sorrow

In this world there's a whole lot of shame

In this world there's a whole lot of sorrow

And a whole lot of ground to gain

When you spend your whole life wishing

Wanting, and wondering why

It's a long enough life to be living

Why walk when you can fly?

And in this world there's a whole lot of golden  
In this world there's a whole lot of plain  
In this world you've a soul for a compass  
And a heart for a pair of wings

There's a star on the far horizon  
Rising bright in an azure sky  
For the rest of the time that you're given  
Why walk when you can fly?

Lal-la la....

There's a star on the far horizon  
Rising bright in an azure sky  
For the rest of the time that you're given  
Why walk when you can fly? High!

### **Benediction**

The Lord bless you and keep you,  
The Lord make his face to shine upon you  
And be gracious unto you,  
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.  
Amen and amen.