

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, APRIL 17, 2022

First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

EASTER SUNDAY

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CHOIRAL INTROIT “Jesus Christ Is Risen Today” (GtG 232)

(The congregation will be invited to join in singing the 4th verse.)

4. **Sing we to our God above, Alleluia!**
praise eternal as God's love. Alleluia!
Praise our God, ye heavenly host, Alleluia!
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Alleluia!

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CALL TO WORSHIP *(from Psalm 118)*

One: “This is the day which the Lord has made.”

All: “Let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

One: We have heard a rumor: he who we thought was dead is alive. Could it be true?

All: **He is risen! He is risen indeed!**

One: “This is the Lord’s doing.”

All: “It is marvelous in our eyes.”

One: He is risen!

All: **He is risen indeed!**

***OPENING HYMN** “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today!” GtG 245

1. **"Christ the Lord is risen today!" Alleluia!**
All creation, join to say: Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
Sing, O heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia!
2. **Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!**
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!
Death in vain forbids him rise, Alleluia!
Christ has opened paradise. Alleluia!

3. **Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia!**
Where, O death, is now your sting? Alleluia!
Jesus died, our souls to save, Alleluia!
Where your victory, O grave? Alleluia!
4. **Hail, the Lord of earth and heaven! Alleluia!**
Praise to you by both be given, Alleluia!
Every knee to you shall bow, Alleluia!
Risen Christ, triumphant now. Alleluia!

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***UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Dazzling God,
we are blinded to your majesty.
We have taken for granted the amazing wonder of your life.
You call us to hope,
but we despair.
You call us to work for peace,
but we doubt its power.
You call us to community,
but we judge and shun.
Transform us, Holy One,
by the joy of this Easter.
Save us from the calamity of our selfish ways.
Rescue us from all hurtful and destructive habits.
Forgive our broken promises,
heal our broken relationships,
lift our broken spirits,
so we may share in a new beginning and a new life
through the resurrection of Christ. Amen.

***SILENT CONFESSION**

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

One: Let us rejoice in the goodness and grace of the Lord!
All: **Because Christ died, we receive forgiveness for our sins. Because he was raised from the dead, we receive new life in him.**

One: So rejoice and celebrate the good news!
All: **For by the grace of God we are loved and accepted, forgiven and restored through Jesus Christ our Lord. Alleluia! Amen.**

***THE PEACE**

One: The peace of Christ be with you.

All: **And also with you.**

(From your seat, a brief sign of peace may be shared: a wave of the hand, a nod of the head, etc.)

THE WORD

SCRIPTURE READINGS Mark 16:1-8

MARK 16:1-8 (New Revised Standard Version)

¹ When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ² And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. ³ They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" ⁴ When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. ⁵ As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. ⁶ But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." ⁸ So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON "Rolling Stone?" by Pastor Bill Vincent

[--everyone given a stone as they arrive - will be told what to do--]

There's a point in this story where we've all been...and perhaps still are.

Picture it.

The women go searching...as do we.

They go into the tomb; have a brief, startling conversation with that "*young man, dressed in a white robe*"; and then turn to go out.

And freeze the picture there. Then notice the irony...and the truth.

For they have come looking for Jesus in the tomb.

And now, who's in the tomb? And who's broken free?

Even as they leave, they are still in a tomb,

for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

They have their own stone closing them in a small little world where they can't believe it; with limited vision, foreshortened hope, and set assumptions.

It's almost as if Jesus were standing outside the tomb, calling, "Mary, come out!"
"Salome, come out!" "Mary, come out!"

Sound familiar? As Jesus had earlier stood before the tomb of his friend, and called, "Lazarus, come out!" (John 11).

The women are sealed in their own set little world – boxed in – where death is the final answer.

And Jesus pushes aside the stone that encloses their world – and ours – that blocks their sight – and ours. And Jesus says, "Mary, come out!"

You have a stone.

No doubt, some of you have been annoyed by it: it has gotten in your way; it's one more thing to hold onto, to keep track of; where do you put it? Some of you put it in your pocket or your purse and forgot about it.

Yet, we all have our stones.

What is the stone for you? What blocks your life, shuts you out from joy, traps you, buries you, stands in the way of your embracing life fully?

Maybe it's FEAR. Like the women fleeing the tomb in "*terror and amazement.*" Fear that closes in and constricts your heart and restricts your choices. You cannot see further; you cannot imagine anything beyond a very closed, isolated horizon.

Beyond that stone of fear, hear Jesus' voice: "Fear not. Be not afraid. Let not your hearts be troubled. I am with you."

"Joe, Sue, come out!"

Maybe your stone is INADEQUACY: a feeling of lovelessness.

"No one could love me. I'm not worth anything. What can I do? What good am I? I have nothing to offer. Why would anyone care for me?"

Beyond that stone of inadequacy, hear Jesus' voice: "You are mine. I love you. I claim you. I embrace you, in life and in death."

"Samantha, Fred, come out!"

Is your stone DESPAIR, hopelessness?

"What's the use? I try and I try and get nowhere. The world is so big and I am so small. What's the point?"

Beyond that stone of despair, hear Jesus' voice: "In me nothing you do is in vain. Beyond the worst tragedy – even a crucifixion – there is hope, there is always hope."

"Frank, Jolene, come out!"

Or is your stone HURT? The pain of loss, of betrayal, of angry words and broken relationships. A dull pain, a deep hurt that is always with you, that clouds your judgment and limits your vision.

Beyond that stone of hurt, hear Jesus' voice: "I hear your pain; I know your hurt. I offer you healing and wholeness; peace, and my presence."

"Wilma, Andy, come out!"

What is your stone?

Remember. The grave could not hold him: could not restrict his power; could not restrain his love, or his voice.

Will we hear that voice?

And will we respond? Will we let go that stone? Will we give up its hold on us? And step forth ourselves from the tomb, into newness and life?

I give you the opportunity to make that choice, to live out that step, that hope, that faith.

With a stone – your stone – that you need to let go.

Bring your stone forward [--or have the ushers do it for you--] to the cross: the cross, that was intended to break the back of the Lord of life; the cross, that instead breaks the hold of sin and death.

For the stone is rolled away.

[--allow people time to bring stones forward, and for ushers to collect stones and place basket at the cross--]

There is an additional word that needs to be said.

What about those people who, in the tomb of mental illness, still do not hear and still walk in darkness? What about those who, in the night of despair, still do not hear and still do not see the light? What about those who, encased in the burial cloths of fear or hatred, cannot – or will not – open their eyes or their hearts to the Son...and hear his voice?

What about them? Let's be honest: What about us?

Why don't we see the light or hear his voice...at least sometimes? Why do some people never see the light or hear his voice?

Why?

I don't know.

It's a mystery. The mystery of life. The mystery of the human heart.

And the mystery of a love that, powerful as it is, nevertheless does not break down the door of the heart, but simply knocks. For though the power of God shatters the seal of death and rolls away the stone, we still have to walk out of the tomb; we still have to embrace the invitation to freedom from death, freedom to life. We still have to heed the invitation, "Lazarus, come out!"

So, I don't know why some people do, and some do not.

What I can say, though, is this: Yes, I have heard the voice – a whisper at times; at others, a shout. I have seen the light – just a hint at times, bright and blazing at other times. And I know others have, too. And I know my calling is to share that light and that voice, and bear witness to

that light and that voice; and reflect that light and embody that voice as best I can, so that others might see and hear and come to believe, and come to him.

And, I know that if ever there is to be the seed of hope, God will plant it. And if ever there is to be the spark of light, God will fan it. And if ever there is to be the blossoming of life, God will nurture it.

For even in the tightest death-grip, even in the darkest of despairs, even in the deepest of tombs, and even behind the largest of stones, God is still there with us.

And how do I know that?

Because the tomb is empty...and he is risen, alive and let loose in the world.

The crucified one is the resurrected one!

He is risen!

He is risen indeed!

He is alive!

He is here, now!

For he is risen!

He is risen indeed!

***HYMN** “Christ Has Risen While Earth Slumbers” GtG 231 (*Tune: #509*)

1. **Christ has risen while earth slumbers;
Christ has risen where hope died,
as he said and as he promised,
as we doubted and denied.
Let the moon embrace the blessing;
let the sun sustain the cheer;
let the world confirm the rumor:
Christ is risen, God is here!**
2. **Christ has risen for the people
whom he died to love and save;
Christ has risen for the women
bringing flowers to grace his grave.
Christ has risen for disciples
huddled in an upstairs room.
He whose word inspired creation
can't be silenced by the tomb.**
3. **Christ has risen and forever
lives to challenge and to change
all whose lives are messed or mangled,
all who find religion strange.**

**Christ is risen, Christ is present
making us what he has been:
evidence of transformation
in which God is known and seen.**

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***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**In life and in death we belong to God.
Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,
we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel,
whom alone we worship and serve.**

**We trust in Jesus Christ,
fully human, fully God.
Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:
preaching good news to the poor
and release to the captives,
teaching by word and deed
and blessing the children,
healing the sick
and binding up the brokenhearted,
eating with outcasts,
forgiving sinners,
and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.
Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition,
Jesus was crucified,
suffering the depths of human pain
and giving his life for the sins of the world.
God raised this Jesus from the dead,
vindicating his sinless life,
breaking the power of sin and evil,
delivering us from death to life eternal.**

**With believers in every time and place,
we rejoice that nothing in life or in death
can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

(from A Brief Statement of Faith, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Confessions)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Pastor: God of Resurrection...
People: ...hear our prayer.

THE EUCHARIST

OFFERING

Invitation

Reflection

**Unison Prayer of Dedication*

**We praise you, O God, and give you thanks
that you have given us such joy,
such grace, and such hope,
in the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord.
As you offered Christ to the world,
so we would offer ourselves.
Let our lives be proof
of your forgiving love and empowering acceptance.
Let all our words and actions, our love and service
bear witness to your resurrection power;
for the sake of our living Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Invitation to the Lord's Table

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: The Lord be with you.
People: **And also with you.**
Leader: Lift up your hearts.
People: **We lift them to the Lord.**
Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
People: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**
(The prayer continues...)

The Lord's Prayer (Contemporary)

**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.**

Breaking of the Bread

Communion of the People

(With the passing of the bread, please wait until all have been served so that we may partake together, as a community.)

Sing “Bread of Heaven, on Thee We Feed” GtG 496

Bread:

1. **Bread of heaven, on thee we feed,
for thou art our food indeed.
Ever may our souls be fed
with this true and living Bread,
day by day with strength supplied
through the life of Christ who died.**

Cup:

2. **Vine of heaven, thy love supplies
this blest cup of sacrifice.
'Tis thy wounds our healing give;
to thy cross we look and live.
Thou our life! O let us be
rooted, grafted, built on thee.**

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(With the passing of the cup, please drink as you are served, as an expression of our personal relationship with Christ.)

Prayer

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN** “Because You Live, O Christ” GtG 249

1. **Because you live, O Christ,
the garden of the world has come to flower;
the darkness of the tomb
is flooded with Your resurrection power.**

Refrain: **The stone has rolled away
and death cannot imprison!
O sing this Easter day,
for Jesus Christ has risen,
has risen, has risen, has risen!**

2. **Because you live, O Christ,
the spirit bird of hope is freed for flying;
our cages of despair
no longer keep us closed and life-denying.**
(Refrain)

3. **Because you live, O Christ,
the rainbow of your peace will span creation;
the colors of your love
will draw all humankind to adoration.**
(Refrain)

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***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

One: Receive the good news:

All: Christ is risen from the dead.

One: Tell the good news:

All: the power of death shall no more oppress us.

One: Live the good news:

All: we are free to love as he has loved us.

One: May the power of God's endless love
surround you and guide you,
this day and always.

And let the gathered people of God say...

All: ...Amen.

One: For he is risen!

All: He is risen indeed!

POSTLUDE

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