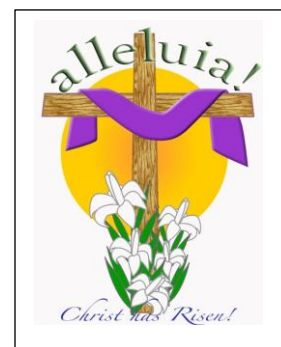


Faith Lutheran Church

Easter Sunday
April 12, 2020



Introduction

I greet you with Blessings today on this Easter Sunday, April 12th!

My name is Pastor Melinda VanderSys and I serve Our Redeemer Lutheran Church and First Presbyterian Church in Newberry. I am also the Administrative Interim Pastor at Faith Lutheran Church in Sault Ste. Marie.

Greeting

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Opening Prayer

Please join me in prayer:

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.**

(Prayer of the Day, Easter Sunday © sundaysandseasons 2020)

Readings and Psalm

- *Acts 10:34-43* *God raised Jesus on the third day*
- *Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24* *This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.*
- *Colossians 3:1-4* *Raised with Christ to seek the higher things*

The Holy Gospel according to John 20:1-18 NRSV

(<https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/TextsAndResources#texts>)

¹Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him." ³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that He must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." ¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing

there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, “Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to Me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to My brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.’” ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that He had said these things to her.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ.

Sermon

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, on this Easter Sunday. Amen.

Oh goodness, it sure doesn't feel quite like Easter, does it? Though I'm sitting at home and listening to this service on the radio and have already listened to it on Facebook, I miss so much today.

I miss the excitement walking into the church, smelling the Easter lilies and tulips, the hyacinths and daffodils. I miss the chatter and greetings and hugs and handshakes. I miss the joyous hymns we sing and the beautiful music from the choir. I miss seeing the pastel-colored outfits, and girls with hats and gloves, and carrying little white purses. I miss seeing the boys in their ties and shiny new shoes. I miss the smells of the Easter breakfasts and brunches waiting to be devoured. Most of all, I miss you!

And though I know it will be at least a month before we are together again, I promise that my words will be a bit more uplifting going forward. But, just for a brief moment, I sit in the solitude of my living room and listen along with you.

A couple of years ago I shared an Easter sermon that pretty much fits into today's time – this time of quarantine and figuring out new technological ways to reach our members and our communities.

For a moment, could you imagine the resurrection story - if it happened today? In some ways, it's kind of like today. We are at home. Many of us may be alone or surrounded by only our immediate loved ones we've been with for several weeks now. There is a dark sense of fear of going out in public where we may be exposed to the coronavirus. We feel a bit of isolation, much like Mary going to the tomb alone when it was still dark on that first Resurrection Day.

Because of our restricted ability to gather together today, what a difference the technology we are now using would make if the same technology was available back then.

Our chosen text from John ends with these words: “Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord’; and she told them that He had said these things to her.”

Listen to this "revised social media "version:

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. She sent a **text** to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved: ‘Tomb stone moved. Jesus gone. Not sure where He is.’

Having caller id or text id, Peter and the other disciple would know immediately who this text was from and set out to go to the tomb. The other disciple – whom Jesus loved – is believed to be John and so we will refer to the other disciple as John.

The two were running together, but John outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. So, in our “modern technology” gospel today, John sent a quick text to Simon Peter. Side note: We all know people who, even when they may be sitting across the table from one another or in the same room or even just looking at each other, instead of talking, they send texts to each other. I may have done that once or twice as well!

The text from John to Peter: ‘Whoa! Only linen wrappings left!’ Only linen wrappings left! What a strange text!

Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head separate from the linen wrappings. Simon Peter's text to John: ‘Yes, agree. Empty tomb!’

And then the gospel says: “the disciples returned to their homes.” We don't know if they had any more conversation between themselves. We don't know if they said anything else to Mary. We don't know, from the words written in John, whether they told anyone else.

But Mary stayed at the tomb. Weeping. And then she bent over and looked inside. Lo and behold, there were two angels in there. One of them sent her a text and asked, ‘Crying? Why?’ Through a series of texts, she says Jesus is gone and she doesn't know where they took Him.

Now, I really wonder if Jesus had the capability of texting back then, if He actually would have. That certainly would be one way of getting His message out to a LOT of people at one time, kind of like so many pastors and churches are doing today! But, let's just “assume” for a moment that Jesus is texting Mary.

‘Woman, why cry? Looking for????’ Mary didn't recognize Jesus. She thought maybe he was the gardener. Mary texting: ‘Where is Jesus? Return him ASAP.’

At that moment, Jesus text: “Mary!”

Mary text: "Rabbouni!" At which point, spell check went crazy!

We assume Mary must have hugged or tried to hug Jesus, because the gospel says Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to Me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to My brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.’”

I couldn't come up with a shorter way for Jesus to have text this. I didn't want to come up with other words because THIS is so important and should be shared word-for-word – to Mary, to you, to everyone around. As Mary left, she tried to text as much as she could remember about Jesus' conversation with her but it wasn't until she saw the disciples in person that they finally understood the entire conversation.

Imagine! Imagine how quickly word of Jesus' resurrection would have spread - if there were smart phones back then! It is interesting to imagine what the First Easter would have been like if they had the devices and access to social media then like we do today.

If you were at the tomb on that First Easter, what would you text or tweet? Or, what picture would you want to send to a family member or friend via email or post on your Facebook page or Snapchat or other forms of social media?

If you have a cell phone, is it close to you? Yes, your pastor approves of you being on social media during church now! I invite you to take your phone and do one of many things:

- Send a text or a tweet or message to a family member or friend. Maybe say something like "Christ is Risen" or "Happy Easter" or "Praying for you";
- If your phone has the ability to take a picture, do that, of yourself or your surroundings or if you have an Easter celebration today. Then post the picture on Facebook or send it to a friend.
- OR...if your phone doesn't have texting or photo capability – OR – if you only have a landline, call someone. Well, after the service, of course! Give them a quick call and a greeting! And then see what response you get.

We don't always feel comfortable sharing our faith or our church experiences with others. But Christ is Risen! That is THE reason for the celebration today! We have a LOT of Good News to share.

We text, tweet, post and talk about all sorts of things every day. Why not share the amazing news of Easter?

It is our faith that brings us together. It is our faith in Christ, in the stories that we've heard, the Bible that we've read, Christ's body and blood and our baptism that we share, that truly allows us to shout:

Christ IS risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen!

Blessing

And now, may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. (*Philippians 4:7*)

Prayers of Intercession

Uplifted by the promised hope of healing and resurrection, we join the people of God in all times and places in praying for the church, the world, and all who are in need. *A brief silence.*

God of resurrection, from the very beginning You gave the church the gift of women as Your witnesses: as preachers, teachers, and leaders. Open our ears to their proclamation this day and always.

Give to those in leadership around the world, the wisdom and understanding to lead with a servant's heart.

We weep with those who weep, and mourn with those who mourn. Cradle the fearful, the suffering, and the dying, assuring them of Your loving presence. Continue to bring peace to those suffering chronic or terminal illness or from the coronavirus. We pray for relief to all who cry out, especially those we name in our hearts, our minds, and with our voices at this time....(please lift up in prayer your concerns).

Risen Lord, You went ahead of us into the grave and defeated the powers of evil. We remember those who have walked on. Inspire us to live our lives in this resurrection hope and draw us to You in our final days.

With bold confidence in Your love, almighty God, we place all for whom we pray into Your eternal care; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.** (prayers from Easter Sunday, © sundaysandseasons 2020)

Our Lord's Prayer

I invite you to join in praying the prayer our Lord Jesus taught us to pray...

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors;

and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen

Benediction

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord's face shine on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord look upon you with favor and grant you peace; in the name of God the Father, God the Son+, and God the Spirit that makes us one. **Amen.**

This concludes our service for today.

If you would like more information on how to view or hear our services and for other information, please feel free to call Our Redeemer's office at 906-293-8331 and leave a message. Someone will return the call.

This is Pastor Melinda VanderSys. Thank you for joining me today.

Dismissal

Go in peace to serve our Risen Lord with shouts of Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen!