



See You in Galilee  
Rev. Dr. Glenda Hollingshead; April 5, 2026  
Resurrection of the Lord  
Jeremiah 31:1-6; Matthew 28:1-10

At the close of worship last Sunday, through the Stations of the Cross we witnessed Jesus crucified and laid to rest in a borrowed tomb. Borrowed, yes, but no one could have known just how temporary it would be. Although Jesus had told his disciples again and again that he must go to Jerusalem, that he would suffer, be killed, and on the third day be raised, they could not make sense of it. How could they? How could anyone begin to imagine anything so incomprehensible?

After the crucifixion, Jesus' body is prepared for burial in haste because the Sabbath is fast approaching. Once the body is removed from the cross, it is cleansed with water and wrapped in clean linen cloth—along with 100 pounds of myrrh and aloe. For those who dearly loved Jesus, this Sabbath is unlike any other. It is filled with grief, with silence, and with the pain of letting go of all that Jesus had offered. The possibility of God's dream for a new world seems lost forever.

The sun sets, rises, and sets again. Finally, with the dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary go to the tomb to be as close to Jesus as they can possibly be. Suddenly, the earth shakes and an angel appears to roll back the stone—only to sit on it—frightening the guards half to death in the process. I'm sorry but do you sense, as I do, that this angel is having a little fun? Imagine, there he is—perched on the stone that marked the end of Jesus and all his dreams. Yet, the same stone serves as a pulpit from which the angel delivers good news: Do not be afraid. Jesus is not here. Come and see where he lay and then go and tell the disciples that he has been raised. And tell them this, too. He is going ahead of you to Galilee. There you will see him.

The women leave quickly only to be stopped in their tracks by Jesus who greets them and repeats the angel's message: "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers and sisters to go to Galilee. There they will see me."

It's interesting that the other gospels tell us about resurrection appearances in and around Jerusalem, but in Matthew, Jesus doesn't linger in the city to gather his disciples back in the shadow of the cross. Instead, he sends them away from Jerusalem back to Galilee.

Why Galilee? It was a region more than a city—a patchwork of towns, a place where cultures overlapped and ordinary people made their lives. Often called "Galilee of the Gentiles," it was known for its diversity. Galilee wasn't the center of power. It was the margins. And that's where Jesus began his ministry, where he turned water into wine, where he taught in parables that ordinary people could understand. It's where he fed thousands, healed the sick, and raised the dead. It's where the disciples first met him, first heard his call, first began to glimpse who he was. In Galilee, their lives were changed. And maybe that's why, after everything that happened in Jerusalem, Christ sends them back there. Back to where they first knew him. Back to where hope first took root.

In June of 2009, I had the opportunity to travel with a group of twenty ministers on a pastoral pilgrimage to the Holy Land. It wasn't a trip in the usual sense—certainly not a vacation. It was an intentional journey into sacred space, undertaken with the hope of spiritual renewal. We were in Israel for about two weeks, and the first half of our time was spent in Galilee. It was beautiful—lush—at least near the water. Away from the shoreline, it took careful, creative irrigation to coax life from the hillsides. Even so, there was a quiet sturdiness and a resilient beauty about the landscape.

I was particularly enamored by the Church of the Beatitudes, built to commemorate Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. The church itself is octagonal—eight sides to echo the eight Beatitudes—and everything about it invites stillness. It sits overlooking the Sea of Galilee, surrounded by green, lovely gardens. Whenever I recall this hillside, I can still feel the breeze coming off the water.

Standing there, it wasn't hard to imagine Jesus gathering people around him—speaking words of blessing into lives that were anything but easy.

Just down the hillside is Tabgha—the place of the Seven Springs—long associated with the Sermon on the Mount and the feeding of the multitudes. A friend and I made our way over the rocks to where water still gushes from the seventh spring. There, we stumbled upon a group of young men—twenty-somethings—laughing, swimming, so at ease in the water. I couldn't help but wonder if Jesus and his disciples once did the same. After long, hot days spent tending to the needs of others, might they have come here to rest, to cool off, to laugh together? The moment felt holy—as though the past had opened up—just for an instant—to provide a glimpse into it.

Soon our time in Galilee and the surrounding countryside came to an end, and we made our way to Jerusalem. To say it was different is an understatement. Even the ancient olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane seemed weary. And then there were the crowds. The narrow streets of the Old City were lined with vendors selling every imaginable item—souvenirs, trinkets, religious keepsakes. At times, it felt less like a place of pilgrimage and more like a marketplace—something straight out of the pages of *Oriental Trading*. At one point, our group leader, Dr. Jones, decided he wanted to bring his wife something authentic from Jerusalem—perhaps a tablecloth. He asked our driver for help and a couple days later the driver proudly delivered his find—which was quite lovely. But imagine Dr. Jones' surprise when he unfolded it only to find a label that read: "Made in China."

Within the walled city of Jerusalem, we walked the Via Dolorosa, tracing the Stations of the Cross and pausing in spaces long held sacred. And yet, amid the crowds, the noise, and all the buying and selling, it wasn't always easy to be fully present to the holiness of the place. There was also something more difficult to name, but impossible to ignore—a tension that lingered in the air. Jerusalem, holy to Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike, carries profound beauty—but it is also a place shaped by deep and complex religious and political strain. I could feel it in my heart and soul. So much so, one afternoon I remember standing there, looking out over the city, when a thought came to me—clear as day: Now I understand why Jesus told his disciples to meet him in Galilee. I don't blame him. I would want to get back there, too. After the betrayal, the violence, the weight of it all—absolutely! "See you in Galilee!"

Seen in this light, it makes sense. The disciples have just witnessed the unimaginable—their beloved Jesus drawing his last breath while nailed to a cross. They are traumatized. And maybe Jesus, full of love, compassion, and wisdom, recognizes what they need most. Not more fear. Not more stress. But space to breathe. Space to remember. Space to heal. Space to begin again. So, go back to Galilee, he says. Go back to the place where you first knew me. Go back to the hills and the water and the open sky.

We live in troubling times. Wars and rumors of wars dominate the news on any given day. Our country is so divided, it will take an Easter miracle to get us to work together to solve the problems we face. Climate change looms larger every year, with drought, wildfires, floods, and storms reminding us of the fragility of our world. Economic uncertainty presses on families and communities. Mental health struggles are on the rise. Even in our personal lives, many of us carry unseen burdens—sadness, grief, loneliness, exhaustion. It's enough to make anyone feel small and overwhelmed. And yet, into this heaviness, Jesus offers a gracious invitation: Go to Galilee. I'll see you there.

For the disciples—as for us—there is still work to be done, but it cannot be accomplished all at once. Maybe today, what we need most is a good long nap, a day unplugged from our devices, an afternoon playing games with friends, or an evening around a campfire waiting for the stars to appear. Through all the rhythms of life, Jesus invites us to follow him. But he also invites us to make time for rest and renewal. Go to Galilee. I'll see you there.

Where or what is your Galilee? As you set your face toward it, at first, you may not recognize Jesus. The disciples didn't. But he will be there—in the place of beginnings, of water turned to wine, of lives forever changed. And now, because of the Resurrection, it is also the place where death will not have the final word—where new life rises and hope is restored. Do not be afraid. Find your way to Galilee. Jesus, the Risen Christ will see you there. Amen.

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