

## Online Worship 4/12/20 Easter

Piano

On the evening of resurrection day, the followers of Jesus were in isolation. It wasn't social distancing. They were hiding in loss and grief and fear. Rumors had been swirling around all day. They weren't sure what to make of any of it. Then, the risen living Lord Jesus—the same Jesus they had known and loved and walked with—stood in their midst. He was still Jesus, but he was different somehow. He was able to appear in a locked room with them. At first, they thought he was a ghost, but he offered for them to touch him and feel his scars. He ate with them. He showed himself to be alive. Nothing has been the same since that day.

So we proclaim and celebrate:

Christ is risen!

**Christ is risen indeed!**

*Litany of thanksgiving* (inspired by Psalm 118)

You, Creator God, are so good! At all times, in all places, let all of creation sing praises to your holy name!

**You, O God, continually bless us with a love that endures forever.**

Though we find ourselves separated, uncertain, and distressed about the future, we know you are our God; the one who remains steadfast with us, and so we sing,

**You, O God, continually bless us with a love that endures forever.**

Your healing spirit makes us whole. In your presence our brokenness is transformed; our fears, you soothe.

**You, O God, continually bless us with a love that endures forever.**

Even as we question the world around us, we see your Spirit move and breathe life into our lives. Each day brings new challenges and new marvels. We rejoice in you and we are glad!

**You, O God, continually bless us with a love that endures forever.**

You go before us, and you follow close behind us. You are present in places where our congregation gathers, in our homes, and in our hearts. Your Spirit fills us with songs of thanksgiving and you place upon our lips sweet alleluias to your name.

**You, O God, continually bless us with a love that endures forever.**

To you we give praise! To the One who creates order from chaos, who inspires all good things, and guides us as a loving parent guides their children, we celebrate and glorify your name!

**You, O God, continually bless us with a love that endures forever.**

(Alicia Vélez Stewart,

[file:///C:/Users/John/AppData/Local/Packages/Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge\\_8wekyb3d8bbwe/TempState/Downloads/A%20Prayer%20Litany%20and%20Hymn%20for%20Easter%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/John/AppData/Local/Packages/Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge_8wekyb3d8bbwe/TempState/Downloads/A%20Prayer%20Litany%20and%20Hymn%20for%20Easter%20(1).pdf))

Hymn

*Christ the Lord Is Risen Today* (1-3)

#302

Affirmation of Faith

At the heart of the Christian Creed is the statement "on the third day he rose again." The death and resurrection of Jesus are the core of our faith, the center of our proclamation, the heart of our lives.

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father, and will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

If you have a prayer request you'd like to share, you can email me: [pastor@durantumc.org](mailto:pastor@durantumc.org) or go on the church website ([www.durantumc.org](http://www.durantumc.org)) and click on the Prayer tab. If you have joy and praise you'd like to share, I'd love to hear those as well. What good things is God doing during these troubled days? What are you learning about God or yourself or your relationships or the world?

We continue in prayer for all who are infected with COVID-19. We pray for their families and caregivers. We pray for families and friends of those who have died. We give thanks for all who have recovered. We pray for the healing of many other diseases, ailments, or injuries and for provision for other needs we have. We give thanks for and lift up those whose work continues so that we can have things we need. We pray for those who suffer loss of work. We pray for families to have peace and joy in these long days together. We pray for students and their families. We pray for teachers and school administrators and staff. We pray for healthcare workers and researchers, for leaders who make decisions about public safety and health. We pray for all who are lonely and feel isolated.

### *Jesus, Remember Me*

God of life, you are the true and living God. We praise you. On this great day when we celebrate that you raised Jesus from the dead, we give you all honor and glory and praise. Because of the resurrection of Jesus, we see that anything is possible with you. So we bring our needs and concerns to you. We lay them all before you and believe that you have the power and the willingness to do miraculous things. We trust that you will do and give what's best in the time you know is best. We thank you too for the great hope we have because of the resurrection. We trust that in the end you will raise us up and bring us into a new heaven and a new earth to live with you forever. Until then, by your grace we will walk in newness of life. We pray in the name of our risen Lord, Jesus Christ. And we join in the prayer he teaches us:

**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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

Just a reminder that giving remains vital in these days. We need to give as part of following Jesus to show gratitude and live out generosity. The church's ministry needs to be funded to keep serving and helping. You can give online: go to [www.durantumc.org](http://www.durantumc.org) and click on Online Giving. In recent weeks, we've had several new online givers. You can give by text: Text FUMCDURANT to 73256. Of course, you can mail a check: First UMC, PO Box 518 Durant OK 74702. Thank you.

Hymn                      *Up from the Grave He Arose* (1, 2)                      #322

Scripture (Sharri)

*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. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 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? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" Then they remembered his words. (Luke 24:1-8)*

*Remember What Jesus Said*

**Luke 24:1-8**

John Breon

There was a Christian song from the early 70s that had this little chorus:

Think about what Jesus said  
Before you let your mind reject Him  
Listen to your heart instead  
And you will accept Him

(Chuck Girard,

[http://lyrics.christiansunite.com/lyrics\\_2077\\_5.shtml](http://lyrics.christiansunite.com/lyrics_2077_5.shtml))

That's not too deep or profound, but I thought about it as we were doing this series on "listen to him." Listen to Jesus and think about what he said; ponder his words, learn from him, draw life from what he says even when it's hard to understand.

We started this journey with Jesus, listening to big chunks of his teaching, at the beginning of Lent. Doesn't that seem ages ago? When we started, we had no idea where we'd be today. We've walked with Jesus and learned from him all along this journey from the Mount of Transfiguration to the cross—and now to the empty tomb.

What do we make of Easter? Especially in these troubled days, what do we find in Easter, in the message of Jesus' resurrection?

This Easter, we may find ourselves feeling more entombed than in other years. This widespread virus causes fear. It drives us to shelter in place, to stay safer at home, to keep our distance from each other. Those who are infected by COVID-19 are weakened and isolated. Every day we get news of people dying and the numbers of those who have died. We started Lent on Ash Wednesday being reminded of our mortality, the fact that we'll die. Now we're reminded of death and dying every day. The tomb is where everyone ends up.

And then there are all the struggles and illnesses and pains we had before COVID. There are still a lot of problems that would be going on without the virus. I've dealt with physical pain like I haven't had to before. Now, I have nerves being affected and that causes weakness and some loss of muscle control. It's frustrating and scary. I've heard from some of you and some other friends who have similar problems. It wouldn't be hard to gather a support group of people who have similar ailments or losses or problems—whatever they might be. Our own pain can lead us to be more sympathetic, empathetic, and compassionate toward others. Suffering is an opportunity for us to show compassion to each other. But pain can still feel like a tomb we can't escape.

There's the experience of loss and grief that's common to all people. When death takes someone we love, there's an empty place in our lives, in our hearts. Grief can feel like a tomb we can't get out of.

The women who came to Jesus' tomb early that day must have had hearts heavy with grief. They came with spices to anoint his body and show respect for him. The story begins with an obvious fact: Jesus is dead and his followers assume he'll stay that way. He was really dead. He wasn't faking. He took on and entered into everything about being human, including our dying.

Yet when the women arrive at his tomb, they find the stone rolled away, but they don't find the body of the Lord Jesus. The tomb is empty. That's the first surprise and shock of the morning. It raises more questions. It confuses them. They try to adjust to this unexpected reality.

Suddenly two men in clothes gleaming like lightning stand beside the women. Some of the other Gospels tell us these are angels. They're messengers from God and they have a message for these women. It's a message they'll share with the other followers of Jesus. They still haven't seen the risen Lord. All they have is the message. In that way, they're more like us than we may have thought. We believe the message without seeing the Lord.

And the message is, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" They thought they were looking for someone who was dead, not someone living. But Jesus is no longer dead. He is the living one.

The message goes on: "He is not here; he has risen!" Jesus was really dead. Now he's really alive.

The message concludes, "Remember how he told you about all of this." Then the women remembered Jesus' words. Pieces are starting to fall into place. They're beginning to connect the dots, to put together many things that Jesus said.

As we've talked about listening to Jesus, we need to remember his words. What's he said? What stories has he told? What challenges has he given? What encouragement?

Because he is not dead, but he is risen, we have all the more reason to listen to him. The resurrection shows that Jesus is the Lord, the one whose kingdom has no end. His life and teaching are vindicated by his resurrection. He knows what he's talking about and we can trust him.

Specifically, the words of Jesus the women remembered were the ones he spoke in advance about his own suffering, death and resurrection. Luke records three times that Jesus told his disciples what was coming, what was going to happen to him. They never understood. Maybe they thought he was telling a parable or using a figure a speech. They believed that Jesus was the Messiah and they didn't have room in their thinking for a Messiah who suffers and gets crucified.

On one occasion, Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "God's Messiah." Then Jesus showed that he's not the kind of king they expected when he replied:

The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. (Lk 9:21-22)

He immediately followed this by telling them to take up their own cross and follow him. He calls us to deny ourselves, bear the cross, and follow him.

A while later, after the Transfiguration and after Jesus healed a boy who was demonized:

While everyone was marveling at all that Jesus did, he said to his disciples, "Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men." But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it. (9:44-45)

Were they afraid because Jesus was not timid and wimpy, but forceful and strong? Or were they afraid to know what Jesus really meant? The disciples immediately show their lack of understanding as they start to argue with each other about which of them is the greatest.

You don't have to be afraid to ask Jesus anything. As we saw last week, he sometimes turns our questions back on us and challenges us. But his will is for our good. He always loves us, even in—maybe especially in—troubled and challenging times.

Some time later, after Jesus' encounter with a rich ruler, he affirmed that the disciples who had left their homes to follow him would receive a new family among his followers and be blessed. Then,

Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be delivered over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him and spit on him; they will flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again."

The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about. (18:31-34)

Right after this, Jesus healed a blind man. When he received his sight, he followed Jesus, praising God. And all the people who saw this praised God as well.

May the Lord open our eyes to see who he really is, to see that he's alive. And, having received that vision, let's follow him and give glory to God. Our praise will echo in the praises of everyone who sees what the Lord has done for us.



There's one more time when Jesus indicated to his followers that he would suffer and die. At the last supper they shared together:

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."  
(22:19-20)

Again, they had to think he was talking in figures of speech. But he was really teaching them something about the meaning of his death. Jesus dies for you. His death establishes a new covenant, a new way of relating to God. When we're able to gather together again in person, we'll share the signs of Jesus' body and blood, remembering and proclaiming what he did for us in his death and resurrection.

As the women at the tomb remembered Jesus' words, they began to grasp what those words meant and to see that what he said had really happened. Later, when Jesus appeared to the other disciples, they surely also remembered what Jesus said and realized that it was true.

Do you remember words of Jesus you've read and how they spoke to you in just the right way at just the right time? Or you've heard the Gospels read and felt that Jesus was speaking to you? Maybe you remember words of Jesus that puzzle you. He's alive and he's here to teach us, to help us understand and apply to our lives what he says. And he invites us to keep listening to him in the Gospels and the whole Bible. He invites us to listen to his Spirit in our hearts, helping us understand, giving us light, helping us to follow Jesus. That's a lifelong, maybe an eternal, adventure. Don't give up. Keep seeking the Lord and his ways.

Whatever tomb you feel trapped in—fear, pain, loss, sin, guilt, shame, isolation. Whatever tomb you feel trapped in, Jesus gets in there with you, but then he invites you to come out of it with him. Come out into forgiveness. Come out into new life. Come out into the adventure of life

with God, the God who comes to us in Jesus, dies for us, is raised to life again, and who keeps coming to us now in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Hymn                      *He Lives* (1, 3)                      #310

Let's close with some great words from the apostle Paul. This is at the end of a section about resurrection:

"Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?"

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:55-58)