

**Christ is Risen!**  
**Christ is risen indeed!**

GM and welcome to Greystone Baptist Church on this Easter Sunday - a day when we all come together to remember and proclaim the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

If you are our guest this morning we are especially glad that you are here and we hope to have an opportunity to meet you after worship. In the meantime, there's a qr code on the back of your bulletins ...

This is a place where everyone is welcome  
doesn't matter....

we are all God's beloved children,  
seen by god, known by god, loved by god...  
So as one family of faith let us worship the God who is our resurrection  
hope.

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*...And I Hope*  
**Sermon 218 | Greystone Baptist Church | March 31, 2024**  
**Luke 24:1-12**

Christ is risen!  
*Christ is risen indeed, Alleluia!*

As Easter people, these words **flow freely from our lips**  
on days like today when Christians  
gather together to celebrate

**the greatest promise of our faith: Resurrection.**

It seems so normal, predictable, and almost inevitable to us now  
as we **know the date**  
and plan our celebrations months if not years in advance.

School calendars organize spring break around it,  
and families plan vacations for it,  
travelers hit the road to restful spots and family hubs,  
cantatas are rehearsed,  
lunches prepared,  
eggs are boiled and dyed, hidden and hunted outside,  
and baskets full of fake grass,  
laid out beside childhood beds  
are sure to be filled with chocolate bunnies  
and multi-colored peeps.

We do all of this **because we are counting on resurrection**.

Though I never want to get in the way of a good holiday celebration, a  
reason to draw near to loved ones and share a delicious meal...  
though I **never** want to get in the way of a high attendance Sunday,  
when I can look out and know that the pews will be more packed than  
usual.

**I do wonder sometimes** if our Easter expectations -  
because we know the whole story -

I do wonder if our knowledge of the ending  
sometimes gets in the way  
of our ability to really *get* the point...

the meaning of it all.

Before the Gospels were written, the disciples **lived these stories** in real time.

So in that first Holy Week

before the formal name and multiple worship services,

**there was no Easter Sunday,**

no happy ending waiting just beyond the horizon,

no visible light at the end of the tunnel

to fixate upon as the suffering went on and on.

When the women rose that day and took the spices to attend to the body of their friend,

they were not filled with hopeful anticipation;

their hope was gone.

It had been stolen from their bodies somewhere

between the Passover table and Golgotha cross.

The women had seen more than anyone should ever see as they bore witness to the hardest truths of their lives:

Their teacher, Rabbi, *friend* was betrayed, arrested,

beaten, tortured, and killed

right there in front of them;

and nobody did anything to stop it.

The crowds did not revolt.

The people did not intervene.

Whether through powerlessness, disbelief, or cowardice those who greeted Jesus with **songs of loudest praise** as he entered Jerusalem just a few days prior, **seem to have vanished** into the side streets and dark alleys. Their melodies now drowned out by violence and death.

Having witnessed this with their own eyes,  
the disciples hid away, paralyzed by grief.

**Maybe you have been there before and you know this paralysis all too well?** The rawest of raw places, after the unthinkable news freshly delivered: the diagnosis, the tragic accident, the unbelievable misunderstanding, the horrific injustice.

**Maybe you can remember** the unparalleled weight of your feet as they struggle to leave the ground in order to take just one simple step?

**Maybe you know this grief** well enough to put yourself in the disciples' shoes...

## II.

You know some people say that there would be no Easter without the women who were the first proclaimers of the Gospel.

**Isn't it also true** that even before that, there would be no Easter if not for the courage of those same women to drag themselves up off the floor, carrying the full weight of their grief, **in order to walk toward the tomb?** [pause here]

Once there, they peered inside and saw that the body of their beloved was not where it was supposed to be. **They were perplexed.**

Then, before having time to begin to make sense of what they'd seen, two men appeared dressed in dazzling clothes and the women did what any woman would do if caught off guard by two men, in a graveyard,

after just experiencing the  
unthinkable things they'd experienced.

They fell down in fear.

Then one of the dazzling men spoke:

*Why do you look for the living among the dead?*

*He is not here, he is risen.*

*Remember how he told you...*

And they remembered... **Resurrection.**

With their **grief** now accompanied by **fear** and **bewilderment**,  
the women hurried back to the place

where the others remained hidden away.

**They told the truth about what they had seen** but the other disciples did not seem to remember.

*Maybe it was their sorrow  
that kept them from remembering?*

The group of men didn't believe the women, saying that theirs was **an idle tale - garbage** would be a better translation.

One to be written off as completely incomprehensible,

almost even offensive,

especially given how serious this whole ordeal had been.

*Jesus was dead and everybody had seen it.*

These women had some audacity coming back with **a glimmer of hope** that denied everything they'd seen with their own eyes.

No, they would not, **could not** believe it.

But Peter didn't write them off, no,

Peter seems to *remember*  
like the women remembered, as the slight possibility of their truth prompts him to get up and run toward the grave.

### III.

Our first-hand knowledge of **the pain and paralysis of grief** helps us empathize with Peter.

We know what it is to sit in a room where death has taken its toll.  
To gaze with empty eyes at loved ones who look like a shell of their former selves - all because someone **dear** to them is **no longer near**.

**And we know what it is** to stare *other kinds of death* straight in the face with *empty eyes* and *our own shallow breath*...

Looking into despair and seeing no other path  
except for straight through it.

When hope is gone,

when possibility has become a dead end,  
opportunity a closed door.

**When the light is so dim we can hardly see it** - if at all.

*These are the moments when resurrection is needed the most*

but courage and hope seem fleeting at best...  
more often futile.. *idle*.

**Knowing this, we wonder how Peter  
scraped himself up off the floor  
in order to run toward the tomb.**

That, in itself, is an Easter miracle.

But I have to wonder, if maybe it was the memory.

Maybe he - like the women -

upon hearing the story again,

the one that Jesus told them all when he was alive,

the one the dazzling men repeated to the women,

the one the women retold to the men,

the one that some said was an idle tale

- foolishness - garbage!!

The story of a love so strong it could overcome hate,  
a love so real it could live after death,  
a love so true it could walk out of a tomb -  
but **not without sharing in the suffering that put it there in  
the first place.**

For what kind of love...

what kind of resurrection miracle would that be?

[quieter]

Maybe Peter remembered what Jesus said,

and in a moment of vulnerable courage, (courage to believe), he took off  
running, just in case there was a glimmer of hope

that what Jesus said might be true.

And now we have to ask ourselves if we remember it too?

Now we ask ourselves if we can make ourselves vulnerable enough to get  
up off the floor and run alongside Peter?

#### IV. Conclusion

**We live in a time that so often feels  
like the dark room where the disciples huddled together,  
hidden in the grief, confusion, and pain of their recent experience.**

Maybe we haven't lost someone as recently or as violently as they had;  
but even still the forces of evil are ever-present in this world,  
showing up as prejudice and hatred,  
narcissism and xenophobia,  
systemic injustice and unending cycles of poverty...  
exclusion, mistreatment, judgment, greed... *the list goes on and on  
and on...*

**These are powerful forces of evil** and they all threaten  
to steal our hope and our belief in a God who promises that  
new life is always bursting forth and that  
**love is always the primary language** of that new life.

In this world, it is indescribably difficult to proclaim any good news,  
much less *this* good news,  
for fear (and vulnerable risk)  
that it might prove to be *an idle tale* - garbage.

But friends, **if we are indeed Easter people**,  
then we have to scrape ourselves off the  
floors of despair and apathetic resignation  
and like Peter run towards the tombs  
that are all around us  
looking in and holding out hope  
that we will see evidence  
that God is making a way,  
that love has overcome,  
and that new life is just over the horizon.

You see Easter is a day, but Easter is so much more than a day, it is a **persistent disposition toward hope.**

Not hope that offers a **superficial dismissal** of suffering, pain, and grief.  
But **hope that persists and scrapes us up off the floors of despair**,  
promising somehow, someday, **resurrection will come.**

No stranger to suffering and loss, the prolific poet, Jan Richardson writes  
in a poem called: *Blessing when the world is ending...*

Look,  
the world is always ending somewhere.  
Somewhere  
the sun has come crashing down.

Somewhere  
it has gone completely dark.  
Somewhere  
it has ended with the gun, the knife, the fist.

Somewhere  
it has ended with the slammed door, the shattered hope.  
Somewhere  
it has ended with the utter quiet that follows the news  
from the phone, the television, the hospital room.

Somewhere  
it has ended with a tenderness that will break your heart.

But, listen,  
**this blessing** means to be **anything but morose**.

It has **not come** to cause **despair**.

It is simply here because there is nothing  
a blessing is better suited for than an ending,  
nothing that cries out more for a blessing  
**than when a world is falling apart.**

This blessing will not fix you, will not mend you, will not give you false  
comfort;  
it will not talk to you about one door opening when another one closes.

It will simply sit itself beside you among the shards  
and gently turn your face  
toward the direction  
from which the light will come,

gathering itself about you—**as the world begins again.**<sup>1</sup>

You know Luke doesn't give us any reason to believe that the women  
understood the fullness of what happened in that tomb.

They saw that Jesus was not there, **and they were perplexed.**

Peter then ran to see, but the evidence in that tomb **was less than  
conclusive...** beyond the memory and the hope that it might be true.

**I love that it's left open-ended like that,**  
for us to gaze into the tombs of our own lives  
and wonder what might be possible  
down the road, up ahead, **with God's help.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://paintedprayerbook.com/2016/07/18/blessing-when-the-world-is-ending/>

Maybe today, **our resurrection work** is realizing that **even as we sit in our sorrow-filled rooms** we cannot see the whole story, **even as we struggle to take a next step,** we cannot know for certain that all is lost, **even as we celebrate Easter,** we cannot fully understand what God is up to...

But we can remember what Jesus said,  
and we can chase after it with all the hope that we can muster  
and we can continue to offer one another  
the blessing that somehow, someway,  
resurrection is taking place...

**Maybe that's what hope means?**

That we scrape ourselves and one another  
off the floors of despair and carry one another forward,  
one step, one breath at a time.

**Not offering a quick fix or a superficial mend,** not offering false comfort,  
or a way to avoid the pain -

**but sharing in the shards of life and gently turning one another towards  
the direction from which the light will come. It will.**

So if we are Easter people,  
then we are people with vulnerable hope,  
...even when hopeful tales seem like *idle* tales...  
we summon the courage to remember and to hope - **together.**

**Saying with a persistent conviction that against all evidence to the  
contrary,**

Christ is risen!

**Christ is risen indeed, Alleluia!**

Amen.

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**Benediction:**

Beloved wanderer,  
as you leave this place,  
may you carry your curious heart on your sleeve.

May you look for God in every face.  
May you find the courage to get out of the boat,  
to run to the tomb,  
and to speak of your faith.

And when the world falls apart,  
may you hear God's voice deep within,  
saying,  
"Take heart, it is I, be not afraid."  
You are called.  
You are blessed.

In all your ups and downs,  
you always belong to God.

Go now in peace.

Trusting in that good news.

Amen.