

Worship Service - "What Do You See?"

Easter Sunday, Year C,

17th April, 2022

Acts 10:34-43 NRSV / Luke 24:1-12 NRSV

Prelude

Gospel Opening [Video] [Oh Happy Day](#)

written by Edwin Hawkins, performed and posted to YouTube
by the First Baptist Church of Glenarden Combined Choir
featuring Anthony Brown

Welcome Guests / Announcements

Pass the Peace

Hymn *Low in the Grave He Lay* 273

Call to Worship

One: Darkness gives way to light;

All: Christ is Risen!

One: Violence gives way to love;

All: Christ is Risen!

One: Despair gives way to hope;

All: Christ is Risen!

One: Death gives way to life;

All: Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen Indeed!

Invocation (responsive)

This is the day you have made, O Holy One, and we rejoice! Come. Let the world know you dwell with us. Stir our souls with love and hope, And let our feet dance for joy on your good earth. Open our eyes to the hopes and needs of this planet, and all who share its life. Embolden our hearts to works of justice in your name. Be present to us. Empower us with your resurrection life. Let the world know, through our lives, that:

Ending with:

One: Christ is risen! Alleluia;

All: Christ is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

Words of the Apostle - Acts 10:34-43 NRSV

Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all.

That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced:

how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree;

but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear,

not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead.

All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Hymn

Christ the Lord is Risen Today

280

A Time of Prayer

Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

We praise you, living God, with songs and prayers and listening hearts and lives trying to obey your will.

You have created and are creating, bringing life and hope and love.

You come in Jesus, your Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new.

In a culture where the power and death get all the headlines your Holy Spirit summons us to be people shaped by your power to work resurrection.

We are not sure we believe as fully as we think we should. We are not sure we trust as deeply as we think you require. But we bring who we are and what we have become into your presence, longing to know your grace and your love. Forgive what has gone wrong. Repair in us what is broken. Reveal in us what is good and turn us toward it.

So may we follow wherever your Spirit may lead. So may we love with the love of Jesus flowing through us. So may we, body, mind and spirit, be children of Resurrection, children of hope, children of grace.

In Christ Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Special Music

Annie Center

Gospel Reading Luke 24:1-12 NSRV

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared.

They found the stone rolled away from the tomb,
but when they went in, they did not find the body.

While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them.

The women were terrified and bowed 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, but has risen.

Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee,
that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again."

Then they remembered his words,
and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest.

Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles.

But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

Christ is risen! Christ is risen, indeed! We've finally arrived at the end of our journey through Lent, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday to Easter Sunday. Whew! As I prepared this week for today, and read over the scripture, I have reflected on what more I can really say that hasn't already been said.

Our scriptures this morning pretty much say it all. Jesus died and was buried in a tomb, and on the third day the tomb was found to be empty. Jesus, anointed by God with the Holy Spirit and power, traveled through Judea spreading the Good News of a new way of living out the faith and following God, while freeing those he encountered from oppression and suffering. Through his suffering, death, and resurrection, there is the promise and hope of a life without the fear of death. Often we can overthink and over-complicate things, can't we? When we gather to celebrate Easter Sunday through music, food, and worship, we really do have the whole Gospel, the Good News encapsulated in a nutshell. So what do we do with that Gospel, that Good News?

Well, if you are seeking a solution to the trials and turmoils of an earthly life that you are trying to live on your own, the path Jesus laid out for us to follow can provide the relief you seek. A path based on service and compassion for others as yourself, and love for your Creator who makes it all possible. If you've already signed up for that Jesus journey, your lived life should be spreading that Good News around, individually and together with other believers. That's what Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary, and the other women set out to do in our story today. When they found the tomb empty, and had their encounter with the angels, they remembered what Jesus had told them that he would rise again. So they go running back to tell the others who are holed up hiding, trying to avoid Jesus' fate. Peter and the others scoff at this "tale" they think the women are telling, yet he goes to check it out himself, and is himself amazed at what he finds. Maybe that's the focus we should have this morning. How do we understand the Gospel for ourselves? Is it just a story that we scoff at as a tall tale like Peter and the other disciples? Is it the promise fulfilled that the Mary's and Joanna find at the empty tomb?

Something happened that first Easter. Something that had such an impact that the word began to spread, and people began to seek to become a part of what began that day. That singular event slowly transformed history. In a world awash with pagan religions, gradually those religions faded, while Christianity grew and spread, far beyond its Jewish roots.

However you see the resurrection: as light triumphing over darkness, good against evil, life overcoming death; out of those events sprung hope and promise, hope in a world transformed, the promise of life eternal.

When we look in the empty tomb, what is the Good News that we see? Do we just see the potential of our own salvation, our own golden ticket to heaven? Or do we see all the

potential we have in being and sharing the Good News for others? That's an important question to consider.

If we are just looking for our own golden ticket, then we can focus on seeking forgiveness for our own sins, through our own prayers, and go about our daily lives relying on that magic grace we assume is there for the taking. Maybe we'll show up at church once in awhile to make sure we're still in those good graces, send a check to make sure we're covering our baptismal vows, and then head out to catch the Mariners or Seahawks the rest of the time.

However, if we look in the empty tomb and see the Gospel, the Good News, and remember our obligation to share that vital information, then our journey looks quite different. It's not just about ourselves. It involves everybody we meet. It's the neighbors down the street, it's the homeless guy outside the Target or QFC. It's the guys at the group home down the street, it's our friends, our family, our acquaintances, and our coworkers. It involves picking up our crosses and following Jesus, ministering like Jesus, sacrificing like Jesus. It's less about the floor show on Sunday and more about what happens outside the walls of this sanctuary. In fact, when we look in the empty tomb, we should see the world of need all around us. These sacred times of our calendar we just love to use imagery of lights in the darkness. I'm certainly very guilty of that myself, probably one of my favorite metaphors and literary devices.

Yet what kind of lights are we, or can we be? Are we like Peter and the other apostles? Do we find ourselves despondent, without hope, because all that we thought our journey was about has gone away, faded into the twilight of Good Friday? We worry about attendance numbers and budgets, buildings and maintenance, but is that really what our mission is about? Are we so stuck on what we thought was the plan, like those early disciples, that when everything goes south, we just chuck it in and hibernate at home? How are we being the gospel to those who are in need of Good News? Do our prayers focus on ourselves and our own little club of believers hidden behind our familiar comfortable walls like the early apostles in our story, or do they seek guidance on how we should act as the hands and feet of Christ in the community as we find it right here, right now, to be the Good News we are called to be and share?

This Easter morning let us give thought to what we see in that empty tomb. Is it just our own reflection, our own well-being or salvation, our own sense of what we think God's work should be? Or is it something more? Do we see the hope and promise for the world around us, or just for ourselves?

As we give thought to what's next in our lives in community, as the body of Christ over the next week, let us all take time to pray and think about what the Good News means to each of us, and ways in which we can share that news, and be that good news, to the community around us. I pray that we can find new purpose and meaning that isn't limited to an hour here in our version of a locked room on Sunday morning. May it be so. Amen.

A Call to Serve

All of creation is God's gift to us, including our very lives.
What we do with our lives and with creation is our gift to God.
Let us be about the business of building God's realm,
a healed Earth where there is enough for all.

A Time for Reflection - *Musical Interlude*

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

Risen Christ, Bless these gifts, along with our very lives.
May gifts and givers alike be dedicated
to your work of love, hope, justice, and peace. **Amen.**

Hymn – *For Christ and the Church* 416

BENEDICTION - [Responsive]

Go forth to live boldly,
as if death has no power over you.
Live as if your lives count for something--because they do.
God calls us in abundant love
to serve something greater than our own finite lives,
a greater cause for which we would even lay down our lives, as Jesus did.
For just as death on a tree could not stop the Christ,
so our lives in service to God become larger than ourselves,
part of the ever in-breaking realm of God—
that realm of justice and truth,
of enough for all and not too much for any one.
Go in peace, to love, to serve, and to proclaim:

Ending with:

One: Christ is risen! Alleluia!

Many: **Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**