

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

What a morning it must have been on that first Easter Sunday. The sun barely breaking over the horizon. The air still cool and quiet. Mary Magdelene, grieving, weary, making her way to the tomb – not with hope, but with sorrow. She goes expecting to find death. She didn't realize she was about to experience the shock of her life.

Instead of death, she finds life. The stone is rolled away. The body is gone. So she runs. Peter and John come running, too. They see the empty tomb, the grave clothes, the head wrapping folded neatly. John believes – but they don't yet understand. The guys go home.

But Mary – she stays. She tarries there in the garden. She stays there, alone in her grief, in her confusion, in her aching heart. She's so struck with grief, that she doesn't seem to notice the two angels dressed in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, who ask her why she's crying.

Maybe you've been there before, too. So overwhelmed with sorrow, that you miss things that are happening all around you. That's Mary, on Easter morning. And because she stays – because she lingers and seems oblivious to things happening around her – she becomes the first human to see the Risen Lord.

He says her name. "Mary." And in an instant, everything changes. With just one word – her name – spoken in love by her Savior, Mary's world is remade. Grief turns into joy. Confusion gives way to clarity. Despair is defeated by hope. Death is swallowed up in victory. Christ is risen! And so is she!

This is what the Resurrected Christ does. He calls us by name. He lifts us up. He gives us new life.

Mary came to the tomb expecting the end – but she met the beginning! The resurrection wasn't just something that happened to Jesus. It happened for her, too. And it happens for us.

And it's not just us as individuals. It's for the whole world. The resurrection is the first glimpse of God's ultimate promise, spoken through the prophet Isaiah. "See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind... The sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more," (65:17, 19).

God is doing more than just raising Jesus from the dead. He is remaking everything. The risen Christ is the dawn of the new creation – where joy replaces sorrow. Where peace replaces conflict. And where death has no more dominion.

And because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, when we face grief or loss – and we will – when the tombs in our own lives seem overwhelming, we do not grieve as those without hope. Instead, we cling to the One who conquered the grave. In our darkest moments, the risen Savior still speaks our names. He still meets us where we are. He still turns mourning into joy, because the promise of Easter morning is that death does not win. Hope lives – because Christ lives.

So what does the resurrection mean for us today? It means that sin doesn't get the last word. It means that death is not the end of our stories. It means that our lives are not defined by what we've lost, but by what Christ has won for us. And it means that we can go and tell – like Mary did.

It's been said that Christians are Easter people. All over the world this morning, Christians of every denominational background are celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The calendars of the Western Church, and of the Orthodox, or Eastern Church, have made today, April 20, 2025, Easter all over the whole world. Usually there's a two week discrepancy in church holidays resulting from calendar adjustments made in the Middle Ages. But today, all of us are Easter people. We live in the light of the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, from the dead. We walk with hope. We speak with love. We serve with joy. And when we come to life's tombs and dead ends, we remember that the One who loved us most is not in the grave. He is risen! He is risen indeed!

Prayer: Risen Lord Jesus, You met Mary in her grief and turned her sorrow into joy. Meet us today in whatever we carry – our doubts, our fears, our brokenness – and speak our names with Your resurrection love. Fill us with Your Easter hope. Make us witnesses to Your new life, that we too may go and tell the world, "We have seen the Lord!" And help us to live now as citizens of Your new heaven and earth. Amen.