

Communion of the People

Today we will share bread and cup from prepared individual servings. Please follow the instructions to peel off the top layer to reveal the wafer. Hold it and we will consume it together. Then, please follow instructions to uncover the juice and partake immediately.

GIVING OF OUR OFFERINGS AND TITHES

We serve the Lord with freedom and we worship God with joy. In freedom and joy, let us present the offerings of our lives to the Lord. You may choose to give by mailing your offerings to the church, or giving online. Your gifts maintain our ministries, and make help to others possible. If you know of someone in need—physical, financial, emotional or spiritual...especially if it is yourself, please speak with our pastor or the elder for Congregational Care, Mary Henry.

Doxology “Praise God, From Whom All Blessings Flow” Annabel Stavey & Organ
Praise God, from whom all blessings flow. Praise God, all creations high and low.
Alleluia, alleluia! Praise God, in Jesus fully known: Creator, Word, and Spirit one.
Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Prayer

HYMN OF SENDING “You Are My All In All” #519

You are my strength when I am weak; you are the treasure that I seek; you are my all in all.

When I fall down, you pick me up; when I am dry, you fill my cup; you are my all in all. Jesus, Lamb of God, worthy is your name! Jesus, Lamb of God, worthy is your name!

PASSING THE PEACE

“May the Peace of Christ be with you.” “And also with you.”

CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

“The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD’s face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.”

POSTLUDE



Easter Sunday

April 4, 2021, 2pm

Park Hill Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)

3520 JFK Blvd. North Little Rock AR
501-753-9533; Parkhillpres@sbcglobal.net
Visit our website at parkhillpres.org

PRESHOW MUSIC

Video

PRELUDE “Christ The Lord Is Risen Today”

Virtual Choir

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP

That first Easter morning, no one expected the world to be changed forever.
What do we expect, this Easter morning?
Remember how he told us —
stories on the road, at the table, on the mountain, in the valley.
Remember how he taught us to recognize God —
in the unexpected, in the neighbor and stranger,
in the lost and found, in the past and future.
Remember how he showed us openness to possibility —
welcoming and healing and bringing life. He changed the world forever.
What do we expect, this Easter morning? Come, let us remember our way to Alleluia.

Christ is Risen – **He is Risen Indeed!**

Christ is Risen – **He is Risen Indeed!**

*HYMN OF PRAISE ““I Danced In The Morning” Virtual Congregation –Choir

I danced in the morning when the world was begun, and I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun, And I came down from heaven and I danced on the earth.

At Bethlehem I had my birth. Dance, then, wherever you may be; I am the Lord of the Dance, said he, And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be, and I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.

I danced for the scribe and the Pharisee, but they would not dance and they would not follow me. I danced for the fishermen, for James and John. They came with me and the dance went on. Dance, then, wherever you may be; I am the Lord of the Dance, said he, And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be, and I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.

I danced on the Sabbath and I cured the lame. The holy people said it was a shame. They whipped and they stripped and they hung me high, and left me there on a cross to die. Dance, then, wherever you may be; I am the Lord of the Dance, said he, And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be, and I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.

I danced on a Friday when the sky turned black. It's hard to dance with the devil on your back. They buried my body and they thought I'd gone, but I am the dance and I still go on. Dance, then, wherever you may be;

I am the Lord of the Dance, said he, And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be, and I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.

They cut me down and I leapt up high. I am the life that will never, never die. I'll live in you if you'll live in me, I am the Lord of the Dance, said he. Dance, then, wherever you may be; I am the Lord of the Dance, said he, And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be, and I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.

risen, indeed.

Notes: Henri Nouwen, *Creative Ministry*, (Doubleday, 1978), 35.

OFFERTORY “The Good News”

Choir

SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Invitation to the Table

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to the Lord.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give our thanks and praise....

...Before we call, you answer, O Lord; before we speak you know our words. Help us to pray responsively now, for ourselves and for this world, saying, Living God, hear our prayer, **make this world your new creation!**

Let there be joy in Jerusalem, and peace among the nations. Let the sounds of weeping and cries of distress turn to shouts of joy and laughter. Living God, hear our prayer, **make this world your new creation!**

Let infants grow and thrive, let the old be safe and dance like children. Let illness fade away, let there be no more suffering, or weeping, or sighing. Living God, hear our prayer, **make this world your new creation!**

Let every person find a home and enjoy the fruit of their labor. Let friendships renew, and anger give way to compassion. Living God, hear our prayer, **make this world your new creation!**

Let the wolf and the lamb live in peace, let no one hurt or destroy another. Let us live in the hope of the resurrection, and release our fear of death. Living God, hear our prayer, **make this world your new creation!**

Help us to pray as Jesus taught us, saying... **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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.**

testimonies. First, the messengers meet the women and remind them of Jesus' own spoken testimony. As a result, "the women remembered his words" (24:8). Their memory of what Jesus said when he was present before prompts them to go "tell all these things" to the eleven (the twelve apostles, minus Judas; 24:9). Whereas the male disciples do not initially believe, the women understand correctly that Jesus' absence from the tomb means he is present on earth again. Church tradition has dubbed these women "the apostles to the apostles" (the official name is: *quae apostoli ad apostolos*).

In fact, the male disciples do not go to the tomb at all until the women testify to what they have witnessed. They may have believed that caring for Jesus' dead body was "women's work." Even so, they could have gone to the tomb to mourn their fallen leader. When they hear the news from the apostles to the apostles, they still do not believe. The men think the women's proclamation of the empty tomb is "empty talk" (a pejorative term, like "silly gossip" or "fake news"; 24:11). They misunderstand Jesus' missing body, thinking it represents an absolute absence; even Peter, who runs to the tomb to see for himself, simply "wonders what happened" (24:12), a response about which Jesus later questions him (24:25-31).

What I want to highlight is that Jesus' absence from the tomb creates the opportunity for the women to speak boldly and faithfully on his behalf, and they do. Their proclamation that Jesus is present—he is alive on earth again—is an act of redemptive **remembering**, in two senses: their remembering is a recalling of Jesus' earlier teachings, but it is also a remembering insofar as they re-member the body of Christ. They seek to draw together again a community that has been dismembered—torn apart—by fear, confusion, grief, and distress. Later, the Gospel closes with the image of Jesus' ascension into heaven (24:50-53); this time, Jesus' bodily absence from earth creates new space and opportunity for all of his disciples—including those who follow him today—to **re-member** in similar ways.

Luke 10:26-28 tells us that Jesus taught the two greatest commandments are to love God and love your neighbor as yourself (see also Matthew 22:38-39). The empty tomb scene presents one way to put these two commandments into action. The women's experience, and their response to it, remind us that when we love God, neighbor, and ourselves with our words and our actions, we render Christ visible in a world where the divine all too often seems absent. We draw community together, instead of being pulled apart by fear, confusion, grief, and distress. When we do that—draw attention to a deeper reality that is often hard to remember or believe—God is still present and working in the world. Death does not, and will not, have the last word. That good news—that **gospel**—is what Christians proclaim when we say that Christ is risen. He is

CALL TO CONFESSION

In the uncertain light of morning, with hope we barely recognize on the horizon, we come to hear you again, O Christ, to be reminded, to be pieced into the story you are still telling: Christ is risen, **he is risen indeed**. Let us approach the Lord, confessing our sin, confident in God's love, saying responsively, you shatter our expectations, "**Help us to remember your words.**"

CONFESSION

Almighty God, in raising Jesus from the grave, you shattered the power of sin and death. We confess that we remain captive to doubt and fear, bound by the ways that lead to death. We expect death, and you shatter our expectations,

"Help us to remember your words."

We overlook the poor and the hungry, and pass by those who mourn; we are deaf to the cries of the oppressed, and indifferent to calls for peace; we despise the weak, and abuse the earth you made. We expect death, but you shatter our expectations,

"Help us to remember your words."

Forgive us, God of mercy. Help us to trust your power to change our lives and make us new, that we may know the joy of life abundant given in Jesus Christ, the risen Lord. You shatter our expectations, "**Help us to remember your words.**"

HYMN OF FORGIVENESS "Create In Me A Clean Heart, O God" #423

Create in me a clean heart, O God; create in me a clean heart, O God;

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from your presence; cast me not away from your presence;

Cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation; restore to me the joy of your salvation; Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with your free Spirit.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Listen, church – hear this, beloved disciples: God who raised Jesus from the dead has not given us over to death. In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

TIME WITH YOUNG DISCIPLES

Video Pageant

PRAYER FOR THE READING

Risen One, As we come to hear your story again, show us a glimpse of your glory through the ancient words and through the witness of our neighbors. Give us the

grace to trust those who tell us what they have seen. When we aren't sure what to believe, teach us to take seriously the stories of others. When we think we get it, dazzle us once again with your unbelievably good news. Amen.

READING

Luke 23:50-56, 24:1-12

⁵⁰ Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who, though a member of the council, ⁵¹ had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. ⁵² This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁵³ Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. ⁵⁴ It was the day of Preparation, and the sabbath was beginning.^[a] ⁵⁵ The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. ⁵⁶ Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments.

On the sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

24 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in, they did not find the body.^[a] ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵ The women^[b] were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men^[c] said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.^[d] ⁶ Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” ⁸ Then they remembered his words, ⁹ and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹² 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.^[e]

SERMON

Rev. Marie Mainard O'Connell

COMMENTARY by Michal Beth Dinkler with workingpreacher.org

In Luke 24, we arrive at the empty tomb, one of the most beloved scenes in all of Christian literature.

So familiar has this scene become, in fact, that preachers might understandably wonder how to “proclaim the good news, which for many is neither new nor good.”¹ What's more, COVID-19 and worldwide quarantines have given rise to memes and mottos lauding new life: we will emerge from our COVID cocoons like butterflies, we will rise from the ashes of grief like the phoenix, we will enter post-COVID life as “new and

improved” versions of our pre-COVID selves. The image of resurrection is so susceptible to cliché.

Is there anything new or good to say about the gospel, the “good news” of the empty tomb?

One illuminating theme of this Lukan passage is Jesus' shifting forms of presence and absence. Typically, we think of “presence” and “absence” as opposites. When a teacher takes roll call in school (online or in-person), the student is either present or absent. Whether we will be paid for our labor at work depends on whether we show up or not.

However, this strict present/absent binary does not always stand up to scrutiny. We have all experienced when someone is physically present, but mentally absent (we might ask, “Where'd you just go?”), or vice-versa, when someone is not literally present, but we somehow sense their presence with us. Sometimes we tell people, “I can't be there, but I'll be with you in spirit.” The past year's increase in Zoom and other online meetings has complicated our culture's notions of presence and absence, as we simultaneously join people from around the world in digital spaces, or keep our computer cameras off but assure others that we are, in fact, present and listening. What does it mean in this era to be “here with” others?

At the start of Luke's empty tomb scene, a group of faithful female disciples whom we know from earlier in the Gospel—Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and “other women” (24:10)—go to the tomb with spices which they have prepared to pay their respects. They have a completely predictable, if gut-wrenching, job to do, one they have likely done many times before. Yet, to their great surprise, the women do “**not** find the body of the Lord Jesus” (24:3). Jesus is absent. Most of us are desensitized to how utterly shocking this must have been: if anyone should be present in a particular place, it would be a dead body in its tomb. But Jesus' body is missing.

Still, Jesus' absence unexpectedly points to his presence in a new way. Two angelic messengers, echoing Jesus' own prediction in Luke 9:22, urge the women not to fear, to remember that this is not as unpredictable as it might seem: “Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again” (24:6-7).

Notice that this is the first time in Luke's Gospel that we hear of Jesus' resurrection. Luke never describes God raising Jesus from the dead; instead of narrating the event itself, the author tells his audience about the resurrection through a series of spoken