

Please enjoy photos embedded from Pastor Janet's 2008 Lenten pilgrimage to the Holy Land.



WORSHIP for Easter Sunday - April 12, 2020

Prelude play by Collin Richardson: "Christ the Lord is Risen Today"

Charles Wesley (1739); public domain; steaming CCLI 20373701

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1m3k5Hst8Q7n19rRXwuODuCVNzhmtve1f/view>

Call to Worship from Psalm 118:1: *Unison*

**Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.**

Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous.

Opening Hymn: "The Day of Resurrection"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pSODR_y1_U

Prayer of Confession: *Unison*

We confess, O God, that we do not always give thanks to you. We do not always act in joy. Often, we fail to proclaim what you have done in your goodness and your love. Forgive us in your mercy. Save us from our sin, through Christ, Our Savior and Lord. Amen.

(Pause for a time of silent confession.)

Assurance of Forgiveness: *Responsively*

As those who saw you at your resurrection proclaimed that you have risen from the dead. Your resurrection assures us of the power of the cross. We believe the good news of the gospel.

In Jesus Christ we are forgiven!

"The Gloria Patri"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dgcYD_m4OhU

Opening Hymn: "Christ the Lord is Risen Today"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nzy7jFNUc3w>

Call to God's Word: *Unison*

"Scripture cannot be set aside... What does Scripture say?" John 10:35 & Romans 4:3.

Prayer for Illumination: *Unison*

Lord, let us hear your resurrection message, and enliven us as resurrection people. Amen.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 28:1-10 (NIV)

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+28%3A1-10&version=NIV>

SERMON: "You Will See Him" by The Reverend Dr. Janet Hufford

As we shall hear in today's Gospel passage for Easter, the angel promises the women concerning Jesus, "You will see him." Oh, what comforting words to hear! To hear of seeing once again someone whom we love. Such words are powerful for we who wait to see each

other again, face to face and in person. When we cannot see ones whom we love, we miss them. Our hearts hurt. We grieve. We long to see our loved ones. We feel this way now. Though the order is for our well-being as a whole, when we “stay at home,” we cannot see those whom we love. But listen! The angel promises, “You will see him.”

“Peekaboo, I see you,” is a favorite game between parents and their babies. Not only is the game fun, but it also teaches children that absence doesn’t last forever. Even though mommy and daddy have to leave for a time, “You will see them.”

“Seeing is believing,” goes the saying. “I saw it with my own eyes,” exclaims the eye witness. “I told you so!” one child taunts another, “See!”



But like spring flowers that cannot be seen until time in the season, until it was time to see, no one could see. Jesus was crucified on the Friday of the sacrifice of the Passover lamb. Then he died. Hurriedly, before the sunset he was removed from the cross and laid in the tomb. They had to hurry before the sunset on Friday, because it was Sabbath. They got Jesus into the tomb just in time, but they couldn’t properly prepare his body for burial. For that they had to wait until the Sabbath ended at sunset on Saturday.

They didn’t go to the tomb though Sabbath night, because it was too dark to see. Instead of 24, they had to wait 36 hours. They went on Sunday morning. Even at that they had to wait till sunrise, until dawn, until the light of day. Had they gone in the dark on Saturday night, they could not see. With that...

28:1: “After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.” Even more than to prepare Jesus’ body with burial spices, they went to look at the tomb. They went to see. They wanted to see, not the tomb, but Jesus. Yet there was a large stone over the mouth of the tomb that blocked their entry and their view! It looked as though there was no solution, no way, no hope. But then...

28:2: “There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it,” as if to say, “So there. You want to see. Now you can see. No task is too big for God. He has sent me to answer your prayer. So there!”

The women still haven’t looked into the tomb though. Their eyes are on the angel.

28:3-5a: “His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid...’”

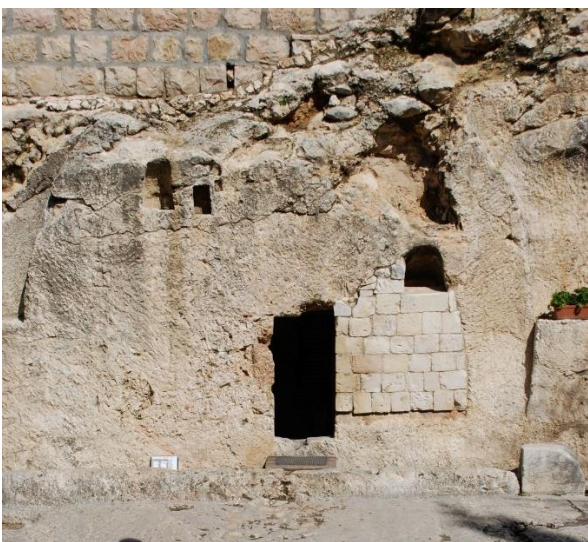
We have such sweet ideas of angels, but they are invisible spirits. If and when they appear, they can surprise us and also look terribly fearsome. This angel looked like lightning, which we all know is a dangerous thing. Further, he came down from heaven following a violent

earthquake. No wonder the guards were so afraid. No wonder the angel, as angels often did, had to assure the women.

28:5: The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.” The angel knew the hearts and intentions of the women, so they didn’t need to be afraid. Since the angel knew intentions, no wonder the guards were afraid. They were not harbingers of the faith, but sent by enemies of Christ and his kingdom. So, like the earthquake they shook, and turned white, not angel white, but like dead men, with color drained from them.

The women though didn’t need to be afraid this angel. They, like the angel, loved Jesus. Further, this was a messenger sent to deliver a word that they had all once heard directly from Jesus.

28:6a: “He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.” To this day on the wall of the garden tomb is a sign with the message, “He has risen!” When I went to Jerusalem, I got to see it. Those of you who have been to Jerusalem, likely saw it, too. Every year on Sunday, we long to hear it yet again, “He has risen, just as he said!” Jesus’ word is always true. Today I proclaim to you, just as the angel did to the women, “He has risen, just as he said!”



28:6b: “Come and see the place where he lay.” The angel had already told them, but, now that he has removed the tomb stone blocking the way, he steps aside to invite them in to see what

they want to see, to accomplish the task they have set out to do. Once inside, they clearly see that Jesus is not there. His body is gone. The tomb is empty, except other Gospels tell us for his burial cloths, the last remaining evidence that he once lay there.

28:7: “Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’” The women had come for one assignment, “to look at the tomb” and to prepare Jesus body for burial, as other Gospels say that they carry spices with them. However, God had in mind for them a more joyful assignment. The women are those chosen to deliver the 1st Easter message to the church. They are sent to preach and proclaim the good news of Jesus’ resurrection, just as he said. “He has risen from the dead!”

This angel, on a mission from God to tell the women what he has been sent to say, once done, exclaims, “Now I have told you,” as if reporting to his highest ranked commanding officer in heaven, “Mission accomplished, Sir!” Now it’s the women’s turn. The baton has been relayed. The torch has been passed.

28:8: “So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.” The women ran away from the place that usually held death to report life and resurrection! They ran filled with joy, although afraid. Afraid they would not be believed. They, after all, did not see Jesus, for whom they looked. They only heard and saw an angel.

28:9: “Suddenly Jesus met them. ‘Greetings,’ he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him.” They not only saw, but also heard and touched Jesus. They held proof of his being alive. They were able to clasp his feet and worship him. Jesus came for them to see, hear, and touch him, because while they were filled with joy, they were afraid that the disciples would not believe them. They were not part of the 12, but were only the women who served them. Nevertheless, Jesus would not let them stay at his feet. These women, with hearts of servants who had faithfully remained at his side at the cross when the 12 had fled and hid, still had an assignment to carry out the will of God.

28:10: “Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. God and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.’” They must have gone and told, because we have this and other Gospel accounts that report.

Now it’s our turn. Though night is still upon us in this darkened time of a world pandemic. Our assignment, like that of the angel, the women, and later the apostles and other disciples, is to bring the Good News of promise into the darkness, “You will see him.”

Granted Jesus only appeared on earth following his resurrection for 40 days, but during that season he appeared to many. The Gospels contain eye witness accounts of the women who saw Jesus resurrected from the grave on the first day of the week: Mary Magdalene, the other Mary, Salome, Joanna, & others. Later that day: Peter and all the twelve; Cleopas and the

other disciple on the road to Emmaus; and James Jesus' brother. The Gospels also contain an account of 500 others who over the next 40 days also saw Jesus.

During 40 days of resurrection appearances, Jesus gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He was not just seen and heard, but also touched. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched - this we proclaim concerning the Word of life," John writes in the 1st sentence of his 1st letter. For Jesus did not come as spirit. Jesus came in his resurrected body. He even ate with the disciples: bread in the upper room and fish along the sea of Galilee.

After 40 days Jesus ascended into heaven to be at the right hand of the Father on the throne, but from there he appeared to Stephen, the first martyr of the faith. Jesus was seen and heard on the road to Damascus by Saul, whom we know as Paul. Jesus was seen and heard by John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, on the island of Patmos.

Jesus appeared to his disciples, while they were confined, as we now are confined. John was confined in exile. Paul, too, spend years in confinement, separated from the flock. Other apostles and evangelists were also confined to jail.

Yet, the confinement of the apostles, evangelists, and other followers of Christ did not stop the Good News. Though the task wasn't easy, they wrote letters to churches and fellow believers. We have those letters in our Bibles! So that we who have not seen, heard, or touched the risen Christ, come to believe in Jesus through hearing eye witnesses. Followers of Jesus were scattered, because of persecution, like we are scattered to "stay at home." But in scattering the faith spread, even without today's modern conveniences of communication. Like the angel and the women at the tomb, the apostles, and other before us, we who believe can tell, maybe not in person now, but by letter, card, telephone, text, email, social media, zoom, and by so many more means than were available in Bible times.

At his resurrection appearance in John 20:21, Jesus says to Thomas, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." For after the apostles die, belief comes by hearing.

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17.

"You will see me," the angel and Jesus tell the women, who are eye witnesses. Through Matthew we read, "You will see me." But for us, as Celler told the children at our last time when we congregated in worship on 3/15, "Not yet."

For now it is faith not sight that keeps hope alive. **Epistle Reading: Hebrews 11:1-12:7**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews+11&version=NIV>

Hebrews 11:1-3: "Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible."

Faith in action is the title of Hebrews 11. The actions of Abel, Enoch, and Noah. Hebrews 11:7: By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family.

Hebrews 11:8: By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

Others who had faith put into action were Isaac, Joseph, Moses and the Israelites, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, and Samuel.

Faith comes in presence unseen. Hebrews 12:1-3: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

Faith exercises endurance. Hebrews 12:7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children.

You will see him, but for now in faith not by sight. Faith comes by hearing. Proclaim the Good News of Jesus to this scattered and darkened world. He has risen, just as he said!

Anthem: "The Easter Song"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bYMpoh1e00>

Lord's Prayer: *Unison*

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.

Please Continue to Give in Dedication to Our Lord and Savior, Jesus

Benediction: We go in faith not by sight to proclaim the Good News: "He has risen, just as he said!" In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Closing Hymn: "Thine is the Glory"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbBOOmKMLmI>