

Rev. Lisa Schrott
April 5, 2026 Easter Sunday
Jeremiah 31:1-16 & Matthew 28:1-10
Repair, Restoration and Resurrection

Hear now the mystery of our faith from the Gospel of Matthew.

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ This is my message for you.”

So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my siblings to go to Galilee; there they will see me.” **The word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.**

“Do not be afraid.” The angel reassured the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. “Do not be afraid.” Jesus tells Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, whom we learn a few verses back is the mother of the disciples James and Joseph – also known as John. These words echo the words another Mary heard from the angel Gabriel: “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

“Do not be afraid” the angel and Jesus tells Mary Magdalene and the other Mary. And yet there was a lot to fear. The women had just come through the darkest of day - echoes of pain, shattered promises, suffering beyond comprehension. As the gospel writer tells us, Mary and Mary and other women had followed Jesus in his ministry and provided for him. They had left their homes in Galilee and followed Jesus to Jerusalem, for Jesus was their teacher and their Messiah. They didn’t know what to expect in Jerusalem– sure they had heard some of his teaching that the Messiah, must undergo great suffering, and be rejected and killed, and after three days rise again, for Jesus said this quite openly. But still – what they had seen that day – left them reeling – heartbroken – confused – angry – knowing they

needed to do something, but not sure what that was. They had seen the man – one of the respected members of the Jewish Council - Joseph of Arimathea take Jesus' body down from the cross, wrap his body in a linen cloth and lay it in a tomb in the rock. It was a tender scene – especially on the day before the Sabbath. They watched as Joseph rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Yes - Mary Magdalene and the other Mary saw the end – Jesus' death and burial.

And then the morning comes. The story is not over. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. “Do not be afraid”, the angel reassures them. “Jesus has been raised from the dead and is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.”

Yes, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary had much to fear. Much that could have stopped them in their tracks – frozen in place. And yet, it doesn't. They immediately left the tomb – the fear was now accompanied by great joy and they ran to tell the other disciples. They were on a mission. They had a task to do.

This is the way it is sometimes, isn't it? When we are overwhelmed by the chaos of life, sometimes we just need to do something. Do one task to get us out of our headspace and get us moving forward. For it is too easy to get stuck spinning our wheels, doomscrolling, wondering on all of the “what ifs” and “why is this happening”. All of the reasons why you can't do something. What if this is a trap by the Roman authorities to round up Jesus' followers? What if we get to Galilee and Jesus is not there? Can we bear the pain and humiliation again?

I'm sure it was not lost on Mary Magdalene and the other Mary that people might see them as foolish or crazy or making up tales – hysterical women. Yes, there were a lot of reasons for Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to stay put as the world around them was falling to pieces. And yet, they don't. They were given a mission and they left the tomb quickly – still with some fear – but also with great joy. Much like the Mary, the young mother of Jesus did years before.

Brian and I recently saw the movie “Project Hail Mary.” It is currently playing in local theaters so I won't give away any spoilers – and I do highly recommend seeing it. The movie speaks to how we respond to situations when there is a lot at stake and when we are not sure we are up to the task. The protagonist in the movie is named Ryland Grace and the interstellar spaceship is named Haily Mary – Hail Mary, full of Grace. There are multiple points in the story where Grace has to put aside his fears and muster up the courage to face situations where success seems doubtful at best. Sometimes the fear gets the best of him, and other times, he rises to the occasion because the stakes are so high – survival of humanity.

How do we respond when the stakes are so high? Dorinda read from a passage of scripture from the prophet Jeremiah speaking to the people in exile from their homeland. The poetic language speaks to the redemption we will receive through the everlasting love of God. It speaks of the reversal of mourning into joy, the reversal of scarcity into abundance, the reversal of the dispersed into community, the reversal of destruction into divine restoration. God promises that exile does not have the last word. Jerusalem will be repaired. The streets and the houses and vineyards and gardens will be restored. There will be music and dancing again. There is hope for a better tomorrow.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary know this hope. The empty tomb – Jesus’ resurrection – is the definitive reversal of his death on the cross. Grief becomes joy. There is redemption. The resurrection is the definitive act of repair and restoration in a world that was broken. Broken by an empire that propagated injustices. Broken by violence and threats of war in order to keep people in their places. Broken by systems that favored the wealthy and well-connected.

The risen Christ tells Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to go tell others and then to go Galilee, the place where much of Jesus’ ministry took place, and that there they will see him. What does it mean to “see” Jesus? The Greek verb used here has layers of meaning. It means to “see with one’s eyes,” reassuring the Marys that they would actually see with their very own eyes their friend again. And the verb also has the connotation of seeing with the mind, of perceiving and knowing the truth with absolute certainty¹. And what do they “see”? They understand that they are now apostles – ones sent to bring the Good News of Jesus’ resurrection to the other disciples. They “see” that in spite of any fears they may have, they need to act. Mary Magdalene and Mary “see” that crucified Lord is the risen Christ.

They see that sin and death and brokenness and injustice and violence and war and loneliness and exclusion do not have the last word. Hopelessness and despair have been defeated by repair and renewal. Fractured relationships can be healed and restored. Because Christ is raised, we are invited into that renewal—living with resurrection hope, practicing mercy and justice, caring for creation, and embodying reconciliation.

Resurrection is a both/and event. It is for our personal redemption – healing and repairing our relationship to God and each other through the forgiveness of our sins. Restoring the places where we are separated from each other. Offering the opportunity for life eternal. And it is for renewal of all creation, inspiring us to be the seeds of action to overcome the forces of oppression in the world. As one commentator has noted: “Easter means that God has taken one of the worst things in the world (the Roman cross) and remade it into one of the best (the

¹ Joseph Henry Thayer, D.D. *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. Accessed through *Accordance Bible Software*. Version 13.3.4; OakTree Software; October 2022.

Tree of Life), a sword into a ploughshare. ... For those who despair that death-dealing powers have the upper hand: *fear not*. Easter means God ultimately is and will be victorious over the powers of death. For those who feel isolated and lonely: *fear not*. Easter means we are all together in the risen Body of Christ. For those who despair that our guilt is too great for God to forgive: *fear not*. Easter means God has cleared all accounts, liberating humanity from shame, reconciling us to God and each other as God's children. For those who despair in the midst of pain or anguish: *take heart*. You are not alone: Jesus suffers with you in solidarity and companionship, and Easter means you will rise with him."²

And we will rise with Jesus to do this holy work – this holy work being community to each other and caring for the world. Last week a group of us from PCO participated in the Path to Palm Sunday procession to the State Capitol. I shared the Palm Sunday Promise³ last week in worship and I want to end my sermon again with it this morning. On the table outside the doors to Fellowship Hall there are postcards with the promise. I invite you to take one as you leave and I invite you to do the holy work of praying, learning, and acting.

I will pray for healing and justice in my community, in America and the world.

I will learn about how today's issues affect the county where I live.

I will act to serve God and my neighbor and to strengthen democracy.

On Palm Sunday we remember that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a simple donkey. He challenged the greedy and powerful of his day with humility and peace. Authorities crucified him on Friday. But God raised him from the dead on Sunday. *The power of God's love is greater than the powers of this world.*

We stand with Jesus Christ in his love for all.

When others forget, we will remember the way of Christ.

"Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' Alleluia. Amen!

² Salt Project: SALT's Commentary for Easter Sunday online at <https://www.saltproject.org/progressive-christian-blog/2020/4/6/dawn-salts-lectionary-commentary-for-easter-sunday>

³ <https://mipalmsundaypath.org/promise>