

Resuscitation and Resurrection

Menno Mennonite Church
Easter April 5, 2026

Purpose: To celebrate the world changing power of a Jesus' resurrection.

Message: Easter's resurrection not only inaugurates salvation but a whole new way of being as Christ make all things new.

Scripture: John 20:1-18 (I will read): Colossians 3:1-4; 12-14 (please read)

Synopsis: As familiar as resurrection is within our life of faith it is something that we don't readily understand. We can grasp someone coming back to life—returning to what has been as if waking from a nap rather than the all together different experience of being resurrected. Brought to new life of new and different qualities. Resurrection is a metamorphosis into the new way of full kingdom life that was born of the Spirit all along. It is this life that we gravitate toward and in this life that we are invited to live and move on a day to day basis.

John 20:1–18 (CEB)

²⁰ Early in the morning of the first day of the week,
while it was still dark,
Mary Magdalene came to the tomb
and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

² She ran to Simon Peter and the other disciple,
the one whom Jesus loved, and said,
“They have taken the Lord from the tomb,
and we don’t know where they’ve put him.”

³ Peter and the other disciple left to go to the tomb.

⁴ They were running together,
but the other disciple ran faster than Peter
and was the first to arrive at the tomb.

⁵ Bending down to take a look,
he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he didn’t go in.

⁶ Following him, Simon Peter entered the tomb
and saw the linen cloths lying there.

⁷ He also saw the face cloth that had been on Jesus’ head.
It wasn’t with the other clothes
but was folded up in its own place.

⁸ Then the other disciple, the one who arrived at the tomb first, also went inside.
He saw and believed.

⁹ They didn’t yet understand the scripture
that Jesus must rise from the dead.

¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to the place where they were staying.

¹¹ Mary stood outside near the tomb, crying.

As she cried, she bent down to look into the tomb.

¹² She saw two angels dressed in white,
seated where the body of Jesus had been,
one at the head and one at the foot.

¹³ The angels asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”

She replied, “They have taken away my Lord,
and I don’t know where they’ve put him.”

¹⁴ As soon as she had said this,
she turned around and saw Jesus standing there,
but she didn’t know it was Jesus.

¹⁵ Jesus said to her,
 “Woman, why are you crying?
 Who are you looking for?”

Thinking he was the gardener, she replied,

“Sir, if you have carried him away,
tell me where you have put him and I will get him.”

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabbouni” (which means *Teacher*).

¹⁷ Jesus said to her,
“Don’t hold on to me,
for I haven’t yet gone up to my Father.
Go to my brothers and sisters and tell them,
‘I’m going up to my Father and your Father,
to my God and your God.’ ”

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene left and announced to the disciples,

“I’ve seen the Lord.”

Then she told them what he said to her.

Sooner or later we have to look and see if it is all true. In every situation that we could have never had imagined there is point where we have to pause and check in to see if this is true. Consciously or no it has to be confirmed, even just to start living life in a post-that state. It is logical. It is natural. It is the marking of one epoch into another. Among my vivid memories as a child was being ushered through the viewing line to see my grandfather laying in repose. That was when what was real went from a phone call in the wee hours to the real and unavoidable notion that the world was now qualitatively different. It is part of the process. It is something that comes along with the knowledge of a new normal. Somehow we have to go and see.

It is in this important moment that we find Mary on this morning. She is going to see where Jesus was laid. She had plenty of time to consider it—the Sabbath had been and gone. She had the mental space to take it in. Now she needed to go and look and see. John says that she is alone. Matthew has her with another Mary and Mary Magdalene. Mark has two Marys and Salome. Luke has a small crew of women off to take on a task. But here she is all alone confirming all of this, looking to be as close as she could be. It turns out that the horrors of Good Friday was real after all. Now she needed to grieve and confirm it yet again. It is natural. It is normal. It is what is expected. But what she encounters here is anything but.

Try as we do to hide it, we often find ourselves on a day like today doing the same thing: coming to see if it is all true. We come and look at the empty tomb, and hear the glorious music, remembering the glory of the day like today carrying the basic task of wanting to know if it is true. We want to know if it is true. It is hard not to feel like it is my job on a day like today to give the mathematical proof of the thing where we would walk through the irrefutable evidence and end the whole exercise with a snap of chalk on the chalk board and mic drop as we declare it to be incontrovertibly proven beyond a shadow of reasonable doubt. The trouble is that is quite beyond me. It is something that no one can prove. Not for want of belief in the full and physical resurrection of Jesus Christ. I wholly believe this without apology. I do not question the accounts of what happened when given us in the gospels, despite the difference in stories and circumstances they each offer to the same event. Nor do I think that is something beyond our understanding. It is none of these.

The reason that I think that we don't get to prove the resurrection in reality is simply something that cannot be proven. It is not our brand of reality. It is so far beyond the natural

ways and means of how we live in the world that we cannot really bring our conventional logic to bear on this. It is not a logical argument to be concluded nor a medical reality to be explained. It is bigger than that. It is beyond that.

But it is truth. It is real. This I know and I do proclaim. Not as a factual notion that has been memorized as the square root of 144 is 12. But it true in a bigger sense than all that. Because resurrection is bigger than all that. Many times we get hung up on the mechanics of what happened. To be sure it into every day that we see someone rise when they were known to be dead. That is remarkable to be sure, and something that bears witnessing. But many times we get so preoccupied in the resuscitation of Christ, of bringing him from the dead that we lose the fact that this is not the issue that we are looking at this day, and certainly not what we are celebrating. We celebrate the resurrection of the Messiah and that is something else entirely. We are acquainted with resuscitation: of bringing someone back, of awakening them to be restored to life as has been. Chances are we know a person or two who have experienced this in our acquaintance or know it ourselves. It is being brought back and awoken as one who was asleep and now knows it is time for breakfast.

Resurrection is something else entirely. It is being brought out of death into something new and into something beyond what is ordinary. The difference is not just clever word play. It is the change from one thing into the next—from Jesus Christ the god in human form into the resurrected Christ who returns to YHWH God and changes all things into what they were best created to be. Ronald Relheiser, a priest and a writer explains it well: *“Resuscitated life is when one is restored to one’s former life and health, as is the case with someone who has been clinically dead and is brought back to life. Resurrected life is not this. It is not a restoration of one’s old life but the reception of a radically new life.”* It is a difference and I think that difference is huge. Jesus is resurrected and is brought the new God-life into being that cannot be extinguished no matter the circumstance. What is more is that it is this resurrected life that we are invited into not just as a matter of what happens to us when we die, but how are we to live as resurrection people here and now. Our believing does not, of its self, make it true; but it is something that we have seen and heard and experienced in our own lives; truth which tells us something beyond what mere logic can tell. Resurrection is a truth that tells confirms for us the nature of God and the mission of the one God sent, that tells us that there is a reason for hope

even when we are confronted by the difficult realities of our world. It is a truth that allows us to celebrate even in our most deathly of days because we are met in the world with the sure hope and great comfort of God's salvation known in Christ's resurrection and the direct recreation of our own lives and our own living.

The question for Easter is not so much what happened way back when to who and how, but rather the ongoing experience of resurrection that we have in the here and now. Resurrection makes all the difference. That means that we encounter the risen Christ in the day-to-day-ness of our life and living. If we are honest, that is a little bit scary. Because a risen Christ, comes and speaks to us, challenges us, embraces us, and invites us to be part of the work of resurrecting a death dealing world. We have so domesticated and familiarized the story of the empty tomb that I think we fail to really understand what it really means to find nothing but folded grave clothes behind the rolled away stone: it's not just an occurrence—it's an invitation. Resurrection means that there are no longer any limits when it comes to us and God. We are so used to our broken world, so used to the way things are, the way that the powers work, we may not be prepared to encounter the full impact of what it would mean for the broken Lord to be the resurrected healer, for resurrection to be on the table.

Because we are never quite sure how embracing resurrection might change us, where it might take us. Resurrection, new life, does not fit our agendas, our life plans, and it takes off to places we can never predict. We are threatened with resurrection. We can be threatened with what it might mean for us and for the neatly erected barriers that we maintain for ourselves, to have God come to us even invite us into a new life. We often, agree with Robert Frost and maintain that 'good fences make good neighbors', especially when it comes to our carefully constructed protections against a God who would break down our barriers and come in with a different agenda, a different view than that of life more ordinary, but would break down the barriers of the way that the world works, even the rules of nature itself, to teach us that in love, there is nothing which can be so death dealing that it is beyond the power of God to break in and bring about change, life, and hope.

Easter has come, and the tomb is empty and that makes all the difference. The stone has been rolled away and so too the barriers that we so often see as so unmovable are no more. The powers do not have the final say, death is not the final chapter. Life is the rule in all things and

through all things, even when we would think that our world, even our very selves are beyond hope, beyond healing, and might remain forever broken. Resurrection reminds us that there is more to this world than what is before us, what we can see, touch, and buy. Easter has come and resurrection has come, and the barriers are no more between God and us, between the purely holy and the persistently sinful and broken. The grave is empty and so too is the well of guilt and punishment that would say that we are not good enough, that there is no reason to hope, no reason to struggle, no reason to persist in a world in desperate need of resurrection. We are invited to live resurrection every day, living past the fear of what might happen and into the promise of what can happen when we chose to live differently and be resurrected along the way.

This is not to say that despair will not find us. This is not to say that questions of why pain exists will not still be with us. We speak of the world as it is and find ourselves exasperated at those places where the stone is still firmly in place. We all have our baggage that we carry; we all have that which we would like to see transformed. Resurrection is one of those things that is both an event and a process as things are made anew. How long our seemingly entombed realities persist? I cannot say. But know that even our heaviest loads can be transformed, if we can allow them to be. Because the testimony of the women at the tomb is true, we can reject the untruths that power trumps compassion, that might creates its own justice, that the future holds only despair and a zero sum balance sheet. Because they were not delirious in declaring the unbelievable, incomprehensible truth of a risen savior, we declare the death is never the final word, the final wall erected to shut us off forever, but is only the worst that the world can do, and the opening to the whole new world of God's reign and God's kingdom forever more. That Kingdom starts today. That is what we declare, live and believe

We are resurrected to a new life and empowered in the way of our Lord to tear down the walls that separate us from God, that separate us from each other, if we will but live in the reality of the new earth around us and with the vision of the new heaven before us. We, like Mary keep going back to see if it is true, and are invited to be amazed each and every time.