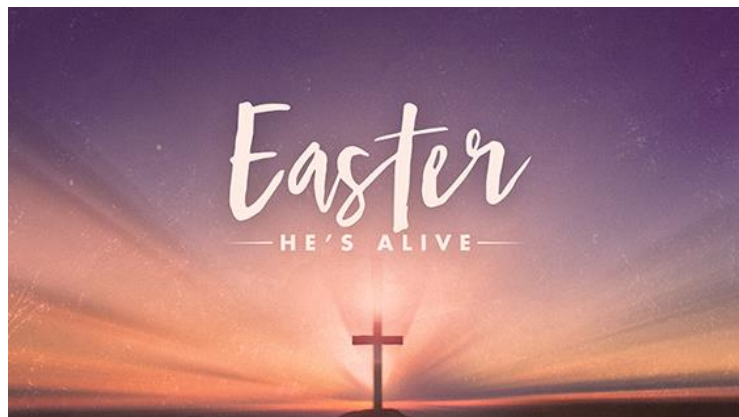


EASTER, THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

APRIL 12, 2020 10:00 AM

PRAYER FOR THE BEGINNING OF WORSHIP

God of life, we praise you for the miracle of Easter. We pray for great joy for ourselves and for all who worship today to celebrate Jesus' resurrection. We pray especially for those whose lives are filled with loss, pain or deep sadness. May they sense how the resurrection is a source of great hope. In the name of the Christ, we pray. Amen.



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CALL TO WORSHIP

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen, indeed!

“Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified.

He is not here; for he has been raised as he said.”

(Matthew 28:5b, 6)

SALUTATION

“Grace to you and peace from the One who is and who was, and who is come and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness and the first born of the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth.” (Revelation 4 and 5)

Alleluia, Amen!

GATHERING HYMN

[*Christ, the Lord Is Risen Today*](#)

OPENING PRAYER

God of glory, fill your church with power that flows from Christ's resurrection so that, in the midst of this sinful and broken world, it may signal the beginning of a renewed humanity; risen to new life with Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

WE HEAR AND LISTEN TO GOD'S WORD

SCRIPTURE

Old Testament Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

New Testament Matthew 28:1-10 Text verses 1-2

MEDITATION/SERMON *Earth-Shaking News!*

“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.” (NRSV)

People at St. Andrew's, let me confess that for me, sermons are to be delivered live and in color; but because this pastor is not so techy as to “stream.” This Easter sermon is coming to you as a written manuscript. I would much rather be preaching this morning!

Since most of you sit in the same pew each Sunday, I do have a mental picture of where most of you are seated; yes, from the back rows to those rows closest to the front; and even a picture of those few of you who like to roam. It is always a joy to welcome family, friends and special guests on Easter who join with us, too. I will miss being with you all in worship, listening to the special music and smelling the fragrance of the lilies.

Change is experienced in two ways. One way is glacially. That is, significant change that takes place over a long period of time, but is not perceived in the short run. It's like the glacier that winds its way down the mountain, melting, gaining new snow at its source, carving the terrain, and slowly altering the landscape. The Grand Canyon represents glacial change resulting in a river, that over millions and millions of years, slowly and gradually carved the landscape into one of the great wonders of the world.

The other way that change is experienced is seismically like an earthquake. Change takes place in a shocking, immediate and dramatic way. We have seen how an earthquake can devastate a city that has taken centuries to build and be leveled in just a few just a few minutes. Change is exacted quickly.

Listen again to our Easter text: “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.” Luke does Easter as a meal on Sunday evening with the risen Christ; John does Easter as a conversation with a gardener, but here Matthew does Easter as an earthquake shaking the doors of a tomb, guards walking around like dead men, and the stone of the tomb rolled away.

Easter is an earthquake, an earthquake that shakes the whole world. It is the day that the whole world changed!

It is an understatement to say that we are living in a world of rapid change. Like an earthquake, our world has been shaken dramatically by the Covid-19 virus. There has been tremendous loss that has taken place; loss of lives and loved ones, loss of employment and savings, loss of businesses and daily routine. Everything is shaking and caving in around us.

So, on this Easter Sunday, we receive some *Earth-Shaking News*. But this news is Good News!!! It's about a God who creates a way when there is no way; about a God who makes war on evil, until it is done; about a God who raises Jesus from the dead to show who is in control. Death has done its worst and was not enough. The Kingdom of God has a future after all!

This *Earth-Shaking News* brings hope at a number of levels of understanding. At the personal level, it means that death need not have power over us. As the psalmist says, "Yea though I walk the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for thou art with me..." We can lay our dead to rest in the sure hope of resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ.

But Easter hope goes farther than that and affirms God's intention to establish his Kingdom here on earth. God's aim is not to evacuate the faithful, so much as it is to work through men, women, and children who share Jesus' vision to bring the kingdoms of this world beneath the rule of God.

Covid-19 has pulled the rug out from underneath us; but this is just a small seismic shift compared to the Earthquake that Easter morning brings! Fear not! Christ is risen, Christ is risen, indeed.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Christ has died,
Christ is risen,
Christ will come again.

MINISTRY OF MUSIC [*The Bells of Easter*](#)

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

We thank you, O God, for this world so marvelously made; for warmth after the cold, for moments of sunshine and color, for swelling of buds and greening of grass, and all the reminders of the eternal design of your world. But more than a God of the Season, be the God of our salvation as well, bringing meaning to our days, purpose to our lives, and destiny to our futures. In Jesus, the risen Christ, show us what you have in mind for us – what it means to live, to die, to laugh and to sing. We offer our thanksgiving and praise.

We give thanks for the ordinary things that make our lives glad – for the smiles of little children, for the sounds of birdsong in the morning, for the animals that become our pets, for bread to feed us, for arms to embrace and in which to be embraced, for ears to hear Bach and the Beatles, and eyes to see life's beauty, we give thanks.

Hear our prayers for those in need. Daily, the numbers of Covid-19 cases and body counts sensitize us to the death that is taking place around us. We pray for those who have contracted the virus, and those who have lost loved ones and are grieving. Walk with those who are going through the valley of the shadow. Stand by those who are ill. We pray for those doctors, nurses and hospital staff that are on the front-lines and all the other first responders who are involved in saving lives. Uphold them with courage, encouragement, strength and perseverance.

And give to each of us, not what we want, but what we need, O God. Use us as instruments in your service. We offer these prayers in the name of Jesus our Lord, who taught us to pray.

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 debt, as we forgive our debtors; lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.

Amen.

CLOSING HYMN [*How in the Grave He Lay*](#)

BENEDICTION

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord, in the power of his resurrection.

Alleluia!

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit; be with you all, now and forever.

Amen!