

First Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

<https://fpresbyterian.ca> Rev. Joyce Yanishewski

Easter Sunday – April 4, 2021

Introit

Chorale Prelude

by W. Rudnik arr. M Rondeau
Rebecca Krawczuk – Trumpet and Organ

Words of Welcome

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

These words are being proclaimed around the world this day as we celebrate Easter and the reason for our hope. Christ's resurrection has changed everything. As has been the case for over 2000 years we celebrate our hope in God's love and grace for our lives and the world.

As we begin the worship service, I would like to give thanks to the musicians and singers of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. This week also features two special videos with music arranged by Canadian conductor, musician, and composer, Maria Fuller. Images in the videos are from the Canadian Badlands Passion Play, Drumheller, Alberta.

Come, now is the time to worship, celebrate, and be changed, through Christ!

Call to Worship Isaiah 25:6–9

⁶On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. ⁷And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever. ⁸Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.

⁹It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

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Hymn

Jesus Christ is risen today

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| 1. Jesus Christ is risen today,
hallelujah!
our triumphant holy day,
hallelujah!
who did once upon the cross,
hallelujah!
suffer to redeem our loss,
hallelujah! | 2. Hymns of praise then let us sing
hallelujah!
unto Christ our heavenly King,
hallelujah!
who endured the cross and grave,
hallelujah!
sinners to redeem and save,
hallelujah! |
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| <p>3. But the pains which he endured
hallelujah!
our salvation have procured;
hallelujah!
now above the sky he's King,
hallelujah!
where the angels ever sing,
hallelujah!</p> | <p>4. Sing we to our God above,
hallelujah!
praise eternal as his love;
hallelujah!
praise him, all ye heavenly host,
hallelujah!
Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
hallelujah!</p> |
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Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of life and love,
Maker of all things visible and invisible; on the first day of creation, you spoke,
and out of chaos came life; out of darkness came light.

On the first day of the week, you raised Christ from the tomb,
and out of death came new life. Now you call us to gather in Christ's name,
to rejoice in the power of resurrection and claim your gift of new life in the Spirit.

Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto you, O God,
Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit, this day and always.

Trusting in the power of God to make all things new,
we confess our sins before you God.

Almighty God,
you raised Jesus from the grave, and shattered the power of sin and death. But we
confess that we remain captive to fear, and bound to habits that hold us back from
enjoying new life in Christ. Indifference deadens our hearts, and we seek comfort
rather than justice. We cling to hurt, resentment, and disappointment and refuse the
freedom that comes with forgiveness.

Forgive us, O God,
and restore us to the joy and new possibility
promised to us in Christ.

Spirit of power and new possibility, through the scriptures, open our minds to
understanding, our hearts to loving, and our wills to carrying out the mission of the
Risen Christ, God's Living Word. Amen.

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Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news! Who is in a position to condemn us? Only Christ—and Christ
died for us; Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us. Friends,
believe the good news of the gospel. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and set free by
God's generous grace. ©The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. Easter Sunday, April 4, 2021 Year B.

Scripture Reading Mark 16:1-8

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. ²And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. ³They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" ⁴When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. ⁵As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. ⁶But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. ⁷But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." ⁸So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

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The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Message Terror and Amazement

It has been a while since I've been on a roller coaster, but some of my children's best stories are about me and roller coasters. I am completely terrified of roller coasters and amazed by them at the same time. I live in fear that I will not survive the ride, but living through that fear and experiencing the unexpected twists and turns brings me to tears and laughter. I scream while tears stream down and sometime across my face depending on the trajectory of the ride. And I laugh between screams. It turns out one of my coping mechanisms in the face of that kind of fear is laughter.

My son-in-law, who loves roller coasters, and upon hearing these stories, couldn't wait to share a ride with me, which we did a few years ago in Toronto at Canada's Wonder Land. Side by side on a ride we rode the track of the roller coaster and like Old Faithful I laughed, cried, and screamed my way through. As we disembarked, people on the ride with us came up and said "you made that ride so much better!" Glad I could provide an extra element of entertainment to the experience!

Those emotions are the closest I think I can come to what it may have been like for the women who made their way to the tomb to anoint Jesus body. They were thinking about the practicalities of what they were trying to do. They had the spices, had made sure all was in order so that they could make their way to the tomb very early in the morning on that first day of the week. Still they wondered, who would roll away that stone so that they could get in?

They last thing on their mind would be that the stone would already be rolled back, the tomb easily accessible as they entered, only to find a young man dressed in a white robe sitting there. They were alarmed alright! Concern of theft or defilement of the body would have been hugely upsetting for them. Jesus, this man they had loved, followed, care for, and had loved them back, all they had left of him was his body.

Then the man sitting there says, “Do not be alarmed.”

Telling someone to not be alarmed when they already are; finding things not as they should be, who wouldn't be alarmed. And once those emotions are running high having someone say, “Don't be alarmed” is not going to do much to bring down the anxiety. Yet, the man continues, “you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.” Well, at least there is acknowledgement of what has transpired over the last couple of days. And then the pronouncement, “He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him.” The place is empty, no body, no Jesus.

The things that must have been swirling through their minds, “What do you mean he's not here? Been raised, what?” It would be more than difficult to get one's mind wrapped around that kind of information in the moment. It is no wonder the three women “went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them.” Most anyone with them would have done the same.

Hear those words: fled, terror, amazement, seized. These words are filled with extremes. This is not like: they ran away, they were scared, filled with wonder, or grabbed. No, they fled the tomb for terror and amazement had seized them. This was truly a roller coaster of emotions! Consider this for yourself. Put yourself in the story with the women. Go with them to the tomb, step inside, see and hear for yourself.

Now think, if someone you had loved and stood by for years, had suddenly been arrested, put on trial and executed, what realm of extreme shock would you be in still three days later. If you can't place yourself there maybe recall the video of George Floyd's sudden arrest and execution, along with the outcry of his family, and the world. There is still shock, disbelief, and horror as the trial unfolds. This is not unlike what the followers of Jesus have just gone through. The women came to the tomb to honour Jesus, to grieve, to be together and now on top of everything else, he is not there!

We hear the Good News! “Jesus has been raised; he is not here.” But how do you comprehend all of that when you saw him tortured and die. The three are in such shock they say nothing to anyone for they were afraid. Mark's gospel is the only one that ends so abruptly. There is no resurrection appearance, only a promise that Jesus is going ahead of them to Galilee and there they will see him, just as Jesus had told them.

What I am trying to get at here is that it was just as hard for those first followers to believe the resurrection as it is for us, and we have all the stories of faith and witness that are the Bible to help us understand. Even though Jesus had tried to tell them that he would not stay dead, no one, I repeat, NO ONE, expected resurrection.

And yet...here is the empty tomb. We know that though this story ends with the women telling no one, at some point they did share their story, they share not only the fear but the amazement as well. The disciples and Peter along with the women all met Jesus in Galilee. Peter was reconciled to Jesus after the multiple incidents of denying knowing him, and in that story were are taught that nothing we can do or say can separate us from the love of God in Christ. We will hear the stories of doubt turned to belief, people given the courage and words to speak, actions that in times of trouble demonstrate God's love through God's people.

The resurrection story is the story of God's kingdom come on earth! It is the story of God reconciling the world to God's self, granting grace, forgiveness, and hope to all generations that would believe that Christ lived, died, rose, and ascended, as God's Son with the power to change lives.

On Good Friday the world was forever changed as God defeated the powers and principalities that bring death, and all that threatens to break us down. On Easter Sunday the power broke through and nothing could ever be the same.

This is the promise, Jesus goes before us today and everyday, preparing our way. Look and you will see him, just as he told you. Amazingly he is in the faces of your family, friends, and loved ones. He is with the poor, the lost, those on the margins, those imprisoned by their actions and their emotions. Look in the mirror and find Christ staring back at you.

Christ died for the sake of the world, so that all...you, me, all people...would be freed of the power that sin holds over us. Free to live in love and light, forgiveness and hope, joy and promise. This is Easter. Take hold of it, the terror and the amazement. Claim it every day of your life. Live it. In Christ, with Christ, and through Christ. Amen.

Special Music

"Oh Sacred Head Now Crowned"

Arr. And directed by Maria Fuller

Prayers of the People

God of new beginnings,

Break into your church with resurrecting power.

Where congregations have drifted apart through months of distancing,
re-energize the connections and commitment needed for ministry.

Where divisions and disagreements hinder mission and service,

reconcile people and personalities with a sense of common purpose.
Where gathering resources or finding new leaders present challenges,
renew trust in your faithfulness and hope that remembers the empty tomb.
Resurrect, renew and revive your people, O God.

God of new possibilities,
Break into our relationships with resurrecting power.
Where they are vibrant and life-giving, nurture and sustain them.
Where they are marked by memories of hurt or current misunderstanding,
refresh them with forgiveness and reconciliation.
Where they are neglected or taken for granted,
open eyes to the great gift we offer each other.
Resurrect, renew and revive your people, O God.

God of new opportunity,
Break into the governance of your world with resurrecting power.
Stir the minds and hearts of leaders
to work for justice, understanding and the equitable sharing of resources.
Where laws are unjust, or those who enforce them corrupt,
call those in power to account and lift up the voices of protest.
Where the pandemic presents new problems and complicated decisions,
bring wisdom, compassion and cooperation to all in authority.
Resurrect, renew and revive your people, O God.

God of new life,
Break into situations of illness, pain, grief and loss with resurrecting power.
Where there is sickness of body, mind, or spirit,
bring healing and hope.
Where people mourn the loss of relationships or dreams,
bring comfort and courage to go on.
Where those who serve and care and maintain our common life are exhausted,
bring rest and renewal.
Resurrect, renew and revive your people, O God.

God of Easter Day,
Break into moments of celebration and joy.
Give us gratitude, the impulse to share,
and a spirit of grace and understanding.
Resurrect, renew and revive our spirits.

God of New Creation,

Break into the circumstances, places and lives that we name in the silence of our hearts... *(Hold a silence)*

Resurrect, renew and revive your people.

Now we pray in one voice in the words that Jesus gave:

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Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Invitation to make an offering

On Easter Day, we celebrate God's most precious gift to us in Christ's dying and his rising. As we present our gifts to God, may our generosity reflect God's goodness to us, and the hope we have in Christ Jesus, our Risen Lord.

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If you would like to learn more about First Presbyterian, get involved in our ministry and work, or make a donation toward the life and ministry of First Presbyterian Church in Thunder Bay, visit our website at <https://fpresbyterian.ca> for more information.

Hymn

Hallelujah! Sing to Jesus

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1. Hallelujah! sing to Jesus!
his the scepter, his the throne;
Hallelujah! his the triumph,
his the victory alone.
Hark! the songs of peaceful Zion
thunder like a mighty flood;
Jesus out of every nation
has redeemed us by his blood.
2. Hallelujah! not as orphans
are we left in sorrow now;
Hallelujah! he is near us,
faith believes, nor questions how.
Though the cloud from sight received him
when the forty days were o'er,
shall our hearts forget his promise,
"I am with you evermore"?
3. Hallelujah! King eternal,
thee the Lord of lords we own;
Hallelujah! born of Mary,
earth thy footstool, heaven thy throne.
Thou within the veil hast entered,
robed in flesh, our great High Priest,
thou on earth both priest and victim
In the eucharistic feast.

Words and Music: public domain

Benediction

Go from here as witnesses of what you have seen and heard.
Share God's love with those you meet.
Bring hope to those who are in despair.
Live lives of gratitude and praise.
And may the love of God,
the peace of Jesus Christ,
and the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit
be within you and among you until we meet again.

<https://re-worship.blogspot.com/search/label/Easter>