

EASTER WORSHIP – April 12, 2020

GATHERING MUSIC

PREPARATION FOR WORSHIP *“Sing Out, Earth and Skies”*

Copy and paste into your browser as a hymn to Prepare for Easter worship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTYOgl9ab0>

GATHERING



CALL TO WORSHIP

How joyful it is, to celebrate the good news of God's love!

We are called to be Easter people!

Darkness cannot claim us!

Fear cannot bind us!

Christ has risen.

Waiting for us to take notice.

Christ has risen.

Christ has risen indeed!

A Brief Confession

In the power of the risen Lord, we make our confession to God.

Gracious and forgiving God, we seek your pardon for actions that have caused harm; for the lack of action that could have been an expression of your love. Forgive and heal us Lord.

We rest in the mercy of a compassionate God. We are an Easter people; we are a forgiven people.

Thanks be to God. AMEN.

GREETING

The Lord be with you

May the risen Christ fill us with life, light, and hope.

Thanks be to God. Jesus is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia! AMEN



HEARING THE WORD

SCRIPTURE READINGS

1st Reading – Jeremiah 31:1-6

Then Peter began to speak to them: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-17, 23-24

*O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures forever!*

Let Israel say,

'His steadfast love endures forever.'

*The Lord is my strength and my might;
he has become my salvation.*

There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous:

*'The right hand of the Lord does valiantly;
the right hand of the Lord is exalted;
the right hand of the Lord does valiantly.'*

*I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of the Lord.*

*This is the Lord's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.*

*This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.*

Gospel reading – Luke 24:1-12

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; 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 worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.’

SERMON

Easter Sunday

RESURRECTION SPACES

April 12, 2020

Topical

Everything needs space ... Plants need space to grow.



Workers need space to do their work



We all need a space to eat, sleep, and live.



Our pets need their own space too.

Churches need a space in which to worship.



Athletic games need a place to be played
A child needs space in the womb to develop & grow before birth.



Everything needs space ... and so, I submit to you this morning on this Easter Sunday, that a resurrection of any kind needs a space for it to happen, a space for it to occur, a space from which to emerge.

Twenty years ago

I was serving a parish in central Wisconsin in a town called Rome ... St. Luke Lutheran was the only church in this small town and I was sometimes called the Pope of Rome.

Far from being the pope, however,

I was the only pastor in town and I got to know some of the parishioners quite well just as I do here at Bethany.

One of the persons

I got to know was Steve ... Steve was an entrepreneur, a small business owner with a vision ... he owned a Christmas Tree Farm in Northern Wisconsin, but his main passion in the world of business was to help “*start-up*” companies get a foot-hold in starting their business.

He bought an old factory building that use to be a woolen mill in downtown Jefferson, Wisconsin ... a building that was basically in disrepair and not being used for much of anything

Making some investment to revitalize the facility,

Steve created some useable space for small companies just starting out to rent at a below market rates to get their business started.

He called it

a “Business Incubator Building” ... He would rent office space, provide space for artisans to do their art, provide space for non-profits to conduct their business.

In those early days, he provided space for local businesses in town to conduct workshops, hold banquets & marketing events to promote their companies.

The premise was that a small fledgling business or that was just in that initial startup phase ... the premise was that they needed an affordable space to bring their ideas to life.

Ideas long thought about or held only as dreams ... now, in the “Business Incubator Building”, these ideas had the opportunity to emerge into living & viable businesses.



Today, it's called

the Jefferson Area Business Center and it still operates as an incubator for

start-ups and small businesses ... It houses a start-up church.

A Counseling Company

A non-profit called “Forward Services” helping the poor and the unemployed with affording basic necessities and finding work.

Two manufacturing companies ... one making lift chairs for older adults and the other is a solar panel distributor.

They hold graduation parties for those companies that grow enough to the point of moving out of the incubator.

Space ... On a fundamental level, it is the space

provided that becomes the nest,
the shelter,
the womb (if you will) increasing the possibility that these
start-up companies & small businesses will thrive & be productive.

The same is true for resurrection to happen in our lives today, there
needs to be a SPACE in which resurrection can happen , from which it can emerge ... Jesus
emerging from the tomb was not just a onetime event – the energy of Jesus’ resurrection
carries over into our lives today.

In order for that to happen,
there needs to be “*resurrection spaces*” in our lives and in the world ... a space from which
resurrection and new life can emerge.

For Jesus, that space was the tomb ... every written account in the gospels

Matthew 27:59-60

And Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean
linen cloth, and laid him in his own new **tomb**, which he
had hewn out in the rock.

Mark 15:46

And he bought a linen cloth, and taking him down,
wound him in the linen cloth, and laid him in a **tomb**
which had been hewn out of a rock.

Luke 23:53

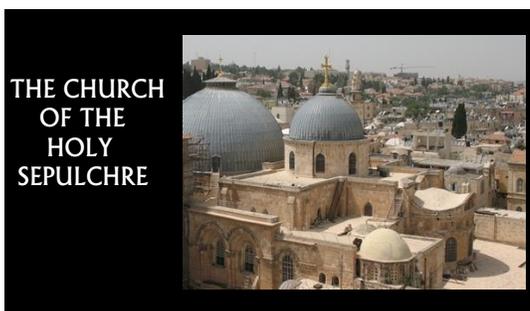
And he [Joseph] took him down, and wrapped him in a linen
cloth, and laid him in a **tomb** that was hewn in stone, where
never man had yet lain.

John 19:38. 41-42

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea ... asked Pilate to
let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him
permission. Now in the place where he was crucified there
was a garden; and in the garden there was a new **tomb** in
which no one had ever been laid ... they laid Jesus there.

(Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) have Jesus being laid in a tomb after he was taken down
from the cross by a man named Joseph. Joseph provided a resurrection space for Jesus.

The tomb of Jesus, tradition holds, is located within the Church of the Holy Sepulcher



in Jerusalem ... archeological study, however, dates
the limestone slabs in the tomb to the 4th century suggesting, in actuality, that this was not
Jesus’ tomb.

Another place thought to maybe have been Jesus tomb is called The Garden Tomb

The Garden Tomb



located just outside Jerusalem's city walls ... it is a very picturesque site, but again, not likely to be the actual place of Jesus' burial.

And then we are used to seeing on Easter Sunday ... pictures like these that do not even



try to suggest that these places are the actual tomb for Jesus' burial, but more so try to visualize what it may have looked like.

I find it spiritually helpful, though, that we do NOT know

the actual location of Jesus' tomb ... You see, for me, I think that if we did know beyond a shadow of a doubt where Jesus' tomb really was ... I think that the natural thing we human beings would do, would be to confine resurrection to that locale.

It would be more of a temptation than it already is to see resurrection as something that happened a long time ago, that it happened only to Jesus, and only in this one place ... Jesus' tomb.

It would be like putting a wall around the resurrection of Jesus, placing upon it boundaries and limits. It would be like confining Jesus' resurrection to a date, time, and place ... so that it could not transcend the moment of its occurrence.

This would NOT be good ... Resurrection is for the here and now, and

Resurrection is for the here and now

Resurrection Spaces are all over the place

Resurrection Spaces are all over the place ... there are tombs from which we ourselves, others, and the world need to emerge.

A quick example that is right under our noses

is the space that we provide for the many 12-step groups that meet here on our campus ... at last count there are six such group that hold their meetings here.



Over the years, I've gotten messages from some of the people who attend those meetings ... two messages in particular, I'll never forget.

I shared this before in talking about the 12-step groups that use our space ... A young man, he couldn't have been more than 20/22 years old, he told me one evening as he was getting on his bike to go home ... he said,

“I ride my bike to work every morning and I always ride past the church here on 82nd street. It's not the shortest route to take for me to get to work (he said) but I come by this way just to pass the church because when I see it, the church, it inspires me and gives me strength to stay sober for another day.”

Another came in a note through my email, it was a thank you to the church for the 12-Step Appreciation Week we've held here where we provide some treats along with a note saying that their group is in our prayers.

It's not so much the thank you that I want to share, as it is the extra sentence, or so, comment that followed the three or four sentence thank you ... that's what really has stuck with me over the years , the comment was:

“I want you to know that for all of us who attend these meetings here at Bethany ... there is healing in these walls for us. Many lives have found sobriety here ... there is healing in these walls.”

That's resurrection happening

in the here and now and Bethany is literally providing the **space** for that to happen ... for people to emerge from their tombs of addiction ... **resurrection space.**

It's a very similar dynamic when we host homeless parents with kids for our

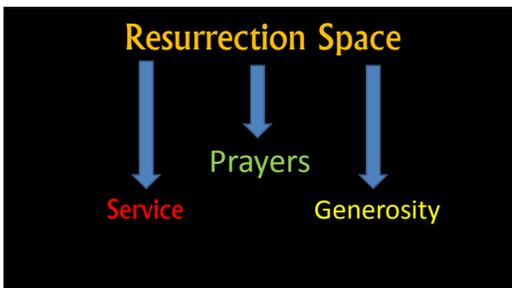


Family Promise ministry ... we provide these families a *space* with a meal and place to stay for a week

This is providing *resurrection space* ... it gives these families a better opportunity to emerge from their tomb of homelessness and that's no small thing to move from being homeless to having a place of your own.

But, resurrection space does not

always have to be a quantifiable space as in square footage ... resurrection space can come in the form of service, Prayers, and generosity



screen 16

SERVICE – During this time of pandemic, we at Bethany instituted a phone calling initiative



to reach out on a weekly basis to our most elderly and vulnerable members, to check in on them for anything they might need, to assure them that we've not forgotten them and that we're all still connected, and to offer them a prayer to strengthen their spirit in this difficult time.

Four weeks into this, it has been a blessing for both the callers and those being called.

Some of the callers read the “At Home Worship Service” to their “*callee*”
Sometimes the one being called offers a prayer themselves.
For those with no computer, the service is printed out and delivered or mailed.

Though it is not a physical space that is being provided here,
it is a **resurrection space** just the same ... the love & presence
of God alive and active amid a difficult time.

PRAYER - In my time here at Bethany ... I’ve heard over & over again that the prayers



we offer on behalf of each other have been the source & energy of their healing, their recovery,
their journey to wholeness ... or, their consolation in times of grief & sadness.

**Did you ever consider your prayers for one another
to be a resurrection space?**



GENEROSITY – In these recent weeks leading up to Easter
Sunday, the people of Bethany have been most generous in their financial giving.
On top of that, they have been very committed in making sure their offerings come to the church
amid this time of suspended worship.

I’m humbled and thankful for this outpouring of faithfulness to our church and its ministry.
Such generosity speaks to the victory of life over death.
Common wisdom would suggest that suspended worship is a financial death blow to a
faith community where the ingathering of monetary support is centered around the
worship service.

Bethany has defied that common wisdom. *But, such is Easter.* Common
wisdom would say that once one dies there can be no resurrection.
Jesus emerging from the space of a tomb says otherwise.

Did you ever think of your generosity, whether it is of time, money, or
talent ... that your generosity can be a **Resurrection Space?** Generosity
can provide the hope, the wherewithal, and the spiritual strength to see
God’s light even amid the darkness.

Your service, your
prayers, your
generosity can be a *resurrection space* ... a space
where God can work the miracle of
resurrection (in its many forms) in our lives.

OK ... so we are all in a space of some kind during this time of pandemic.

The space of confinement that now is our home
The space of “six feet” between each other
The space of the sink as we are always washing our hands
The space of our impatience that we wish this was all over yesterday
The space in our mind that is somewhere between disaster & hope
The space of our fears ... health, economic, or otherwise
The space of our boredom and the four walls

This pandemic has become our tomb of sorts.
As such it is also, then, a space for resurrection to happen.

A resurrection, not in the sense that when it is all over we will emerge
from the spaces of our homes to physically be in the presence of one another again ... though
that will feel like a resurrection, for sure.

But I’m talking about resurrection in the sense, that as we
emerge from the tomb of this pandemic ... we will recognize how important we are to one
another, how we need each other;
we will celebrate more deeply the spiritual
connections that bind us together; and
we will more deeply appreciate and be thankful for
our faith community and what it means to us
spiritually every day.

This is resurrection

Yes, Jesus was laid in the tomb.



**Resurrection Spaces
&
Resurrection**

And the tomb was the space where God worked the miracle to bring out new life from it all.
Resurrection is for now, for today ... be looking for it,
be open to the resurrection spaces that present themselves
to you ... God works the miracle of life and
new life in those spaces.

Resurrection Spaces and resurrection ... is now, today, for you, for all. AMEN



RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Hymn *Jesus Christ is Risen Today* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1brSOs0IMc>
(Copy and Paste into browser)

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We are an Easter People! We proclaim our belief in a God of life; in the image of the Creator we are made. With God's Spirit woven into the fabric of our being we are called to be caretakers of the earth and to bear the life giving energy of the divine.

We are an Easter People! We proclaim our belief in Jesus Christ, sent by God to be a living example of God's desire for the world. We believe that in Jesus, the powers of darkness and death have no claim over us, that our broken lives find healing in God's compassionate mercy. Jesus is that compassion and mercy risen and alive in the world today.

We are an Easter People! We proclaim our belief in God's gift of the Holy Spirit. This Spirit empowers us be the light and life of Jesus in the world. This Spirit is the vitality of God's embrace active within us through what we do and what we say.

Thanks be to God for life and new life! Christ is risen! Alleluia! AMEN!

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Lord God, we thank and praise you for the glorious resurrection of Jesus. We pray that our own tombs, whatever they may be, become resurrection spaces from which we emerge to light, love, and healing for the world..

Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Jesus said, 'Peace be with you'. Bring your peace to our world and to our lives.

Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Your Son appeared to Mary Magdalene when she was weeping. Comfort those who are sad, lonely, or grieving.

Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Your Son met the women and asked them to tell the disciples about his resurrection. Guide us and people everywhere to be witnesses of God's love through the living of our lives.

Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Your Son conquered death by his death and won the victory by his resurrection. Be with those who are dying and with those who have lost loved ones from the Corona Virus. Be with us as a faith community to be a "Resurrection People" bringing light to the darkness.

Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, on this Easter Sunday we come to you with the prayers of our hearts. Hear us now as we come to you in a moment of silence in prayers for ourselves, the world, and those we love.

Silence for personal prayer

Into your hands, Gracious God, we commend all for whom and about which we pray. In the name of Jesus Christ, our risen Lord. Amen. Hear us now in saying the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray:

The Lord's Prayer

OFFERING **(Please mail your offering to the church)**

PRAYER OF BLESSING

God our provider, you feed us with words of grace and life. Bless us and these your gifts which we have received from your generous hand. Use them to bring your blessing into the lives of others. AMEN



SENDING

BENEDICTION

As you go out into God's world this week, be Easter people! Be those who say, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? Jesus is not here. He is risen." Be ready to be surprised with what God will do next. Look for the risen Christ in those you meet. Let the Holy Spirit nudge and guide you. The tomb is empty because Jesus is out in the world, and now we must go out into the world too! May the joy and wonder of that first Easter morning live in your hearts today and every day. Amen.

DISMISSAL

We are people of the resurrection!

We live with hope and we serve with love. Thanks be to God!

Sending Hymn

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1tAvRebJ2A>

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