

Easter Sunday Scriptures and Study for April 12, 2020

What's in a Sunday? There is a story of a young boy who grew up going to church on Sunday with his parents. He went because his parents made him. When he graduated from High School the young man went off to college for a short time until the drinking and drugs landed him in jail and eventually prison. His stay in prison was to be five years. The first two years were difficult because of the anger, bitterness and resentment that controlled his life. He blamed everyone else for his problems, even his parents.

One day he remembered going to church as a child and that name, Jesus, was stuck in his mind. When Sunday came, he found himself in the prison chapel with many other inmates. Suddenly those stories he heard as a child meant something and began to open his heart to God's love and compassion. By the third Sunday, which just happen to be Easter Sunday, he made the walk up to the altar on the invitation of the pastor and asked God for forgiveness and a new beginning. He now understood what it meant to be born again, as he surrendered his life to Jesus and accepted forgiveness and new life.

This is week four of our at home Church and study. Today is Easter Sunday and it will be like none we have ever experienced, since we will not be able to be in a church building. We have been shaken by the coronavirus pandemic and at the very least have been able to focus on what is really important and what is not.

Traditionally, we would come together as the church to worship by singing, scripture reading, flowering the cross and Communion. There will be a day that we come back together to do that once again. Until then, my hope and prayer is that you (and family) will use the church at home study to celebrate Easter and worship together.

The Easter Season, also known as the Great Fifty Days, begins at sunset Easter Eve and continues through the Day of Pentecost. It is the most joyous and celebrative season of the Christian year. In fact, it could be a time of new beginnings as you will see. Let's celebrate by starting with prayer.

1) Start with prayer (Use your own words or the prayer below to help you get started)

Holy Spirit we invite you to be with us this Easter morning and we need you to guide us as we worship and celebrate. We ask for the light of Christ that burst out of the tomb be our light this morning. God of light through Jesus Christ, we need your light to shine in our lives and

this world more than ever. Help us to be the light you have called us to be to the world. Kindle in us the fire of the Holy Spirit and grant that our hearts and minds be aflame with a holy desire to shine forth with the brightness of Christ's rising.

Fill us with the Spirit of truth that our words would breathe life into others and be edifying to those we love. We ask for healing in the name of Jesus, as you break the hold the virus has on the world and our nation. Thank you for breaking the hold sin had on the world by the death and resurrection of your Son. May there be a great awakening of the gift of life offered through Jesus and a turning back to you Father that our land would be healed. We ask all this in the name of Yeshua—Jesus, the Son of the most High God. Amen.

2) Listen to or sing your favorite Easter hymn or song. Here are a few examples:

- a. Were You There
- b. What Wondrous Love Is This
- c. Christ the Lord Is Risen Today
- d. How Deep The Father's Love
- e. In Christ Alone

3) Follow this with the tithes/offerings

(Note to the church: Again, Thank you so much for your faithfulness in your tithes and offerings. Many of you have brought them by or mailed them to the church.)

4) Psalter Reading Psalm 145 (Read from your Bible)

5) **Easter Proclamation** (*You will need a candle or flash light for this part or you can turn the lights in the room off. Light the candle or turn on the lights or flashlight were directed in the proclamation*)

Rejoice, heavenly powers! Sing, choirs of angels!

Exult, all creation around God's throne!

Jesus Christ, our King, is risen!

Sound the trumpet of salvation!

Rejoice, O earth, in shining splendor,
radiant in the brightness of our King!
Christ has conquered! Glory fills you!
Darkness vanishes forever!

Rejoice, heavenly powers!
Sing, choirs of angels!
Jesus Christ, our King, is risen!

Rejoice, O holy Church! Exult in glory!
The risen Savior shines upon you!
Let this place resound with joy,
echoing the mighty song of all God's people!

Jesus Christ, our King, is risen!

It is truly right that we should praise you,
invisible, almighty, and eternal God, and your Son, Jesus Christ.
For Christ has ransomed us with his blood,
and paid the debt of Adam's sin to deliver your faithful people.

Jesus Christ, our King, is risen!

This is our Passover feast, when Christ, the true Lamb, is slain.
This is the day when first you saved our forebears,
you freed the people of Israel from their slavery
and led them with dry feet through the sea.

Jesus Christ, our King, is risen!

This is the night when the pillar of fire destroyed the darkness of sin!
This is the day when Christians everywhere,
washed clean of sin and freed from all defilement,

are restored to grace and grow together in holiness.

Jesus Christ, our King, is risen!

This is the night when Jesus Christ broke the chains of death
and rose triumphant from the grave.

Night truly blessed, when heaven is wedded to earth,
and we are reconciled to you!

Jesus Christ, our King, is risen!

(Turn on light or light candle)

Accept this Easter candle (Light), a flame divided but undimmed,
a pillar of fire that glows to your honor.

Let it mingle with the lights of heaven,
and continue bravely burning to dispel the darkness of the night!

Jesus Christ, our King, is risen!

May the Morning Star, which never sets, find this flame still burning.
Christ, that Morning Star, who came back from the dead,
and shed his peaceful light on all creation,
your Son who lives and reigns forever and ever.

Rejoice, heavenly powers!

Sing, choirs of angels!

Jesus Christ, our King, is risen! Amen.

6) The Theme for this morning is "**New Beginnings**. Before reading scripture pray again, asking the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds and reveal God's truths from the Word to you this morning.

Mark 16:1-8 (NIV)

¹ When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint

Jesus' body.

² Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb

³ and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

⁴ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.

⁵ As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

⁶ "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him.

⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

⁸ Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

Do you remember who anointed Jesus with oil? Jesus was in Bethany, at the house of Simon the Leper, when a woman (most likely Mary, Martha's sister) anointed Jesus with pure nard. (Mark 14:3) She had a whole jar of the expensive perfume and broke the jar before pouring all of it on Jesus' head. She didn't pour just a little or share half of it with him, but poured all of it on him. Here is what Jesus said about it:

Mark 14:8 (NIV)

⁸ She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial.

Why did the three women in Mark 16:1-2 take spices to anoint Jesus' body?

- a. That would have been the customary practice of that time
- b. They obviously didn't know about Jesus' anointing that happened in Bethany or more likely they didn't understand why it happened.
- c. Did they go ahead and anoint Jesus' body? or Did they rush to the tomb to see Jesus fulfill his prediction of rising again? The answer is no and no. They wanted to finish the rituals of burial that the Sabbath had interrupted, however Jesus prediction was right. He **wasn't** there but as the young man dressed in white said, "He Has Risen!" Obviously, the spices and anointing the body was not going to be needed. Jesus was not there and the anointing had already been taken care of at Bethany.

The more important detail I want you to look at is the day of the week this took place.

- a. *Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb*
- b. Most scholars believe this was on Sunday, the first day of the week

Sunday, the first day of the week is often recognized by many Americans as the last day of the week, since Monday is the first day of the work week. The importance of Sunday to God and scripture goes all the way back to the beginning of creation. Sunday is tied to the first day of creation, even though it wasn't called Sunday then, nevertheless the two are connected.

Sunday is the first day of the week, a day of beginning. God's first day of creation was a day of beginning. So, every Sunday has the connection to the creation of the universe, a new beginning. But there is more. The resurrection of Jesus took place on the first day of the week, Sunday. Before we discuss that, let's finish the story of the young man that you read about at the beginning.

The 5 year prison sentence turned into three and a half. When he got out of prison, he went home to his parents and they unconditionally accepted him back. When Sunday came, his parents invited him to church. The young man wanted to go but he was hesitant. He was afraid that the members would all stare at him and judge him for his past and that he would be an embarrassment for his parents.

However, his parents encouraged him and he decided to go. As he walked in the doors of the church, just the opposite of his fears happened. The organist, a rather large, burly man, who had known him since he was a boy, came running, not walking fast, but running toward him. You could hear the thunder of every step and the sound of the pews and floor crackling as he ran toward the young man. He shouted "Praise the Lord" and gave the young man a big bear hug that was followed by many others gathering around him to welcome, love and encourage him. He never missed another Sunday of worship.

As Jonathan Cahn points out in his "Book of Mysteries," Jesus was in the tomb on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath which makes sense, a day of rest. Sunday or the first day of the week comes after the Sabbath. The Sabbath is the last day or the end of the week.

Resurrection happened after the end which represents the power of the cross and the end of the old life and the start of a new beginning for anyone who would receive it. Sunday is a special day of new beginnings. It is tied to the very first beginning. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the God who gave his Son is all about new beginnings.

Easter Sunday is where it all started and what we need more than anything right now as we face an uncertain future. A day set aside for worship of the God of new beginnings. It's meant to be a day of worship. A day to give thanks for new beginnings, new life and eternal life in Christ.

Resurrection is the beginning of the new creation and Sunday is the day it took place. Anyone who would choose Sunday and to enter in, accepting what Jesus offers becomes a new creation. In the Hebrew Scriptures, Sunday is not called Sunday but *Yom Rishon* which means Day One. We are at a time in history that we need a new start and Day One!

Every Sunday is a day to celebrate Day One in a believer's life and that the old is wiped out. That means there is nothing before day one. No sin, no shame, no guilt or failures for all things become new in Christ (2 Cor 5:17).

Are you in need of a new beginning or have forgotten what Easter and Sunday is all about. Let's ask the God of new beginnings to forgive us and give us a new beginning just as he did Job. Let's ask him for a new beginning for this nation, just like he gave the Samaritan woman at the well, Saul when he became Paul or Peter after denying Jesus three times.

Let's fall on our face before God, the God of new beginnings and let's cry out for a new beginning, a resurrection of our nation, our community, our church and our lives. Start this Easter Sunday by rethinking why you go or don't go to church every week, even if it is at home. Every Sunday is Easter Sunday, Resurrection Sunday, a new day, a new beginning for whoever will receive it.

The crisis we are in has been tough but it has revealed some things in our lives that need to be addressed. Our weaknesses have been exposed. Our idols have been exposed. Our faith has been exposed. Our sin has been exposed. Jesus was resurrected on Sunday, so that we could have Day One at the very minimum every week. Could he be saying to you and me, take those things that have been exposed and get rid of them and take advantage of Day One, a new beginning.

7) We pray again for strength and renewal this morning using the Prayer of St. Patrick:

I arise today through God's strength to pilot me:
God's might to uphold me,
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look before me,
God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me,
God's hand to guard me.

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise.

Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.

I arise today through mighty strength. Amen.

8) Now is a good time for a song/hymn or get some coffee or other refreshing drink. Stand just for minute or take a short break.

9) Read and discuss/reflect on the following:

⁷ *But **go, tell** his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'*

⁸ *Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.*

Mark 14:8 (NIV)

⁸ ***She did what she could.** She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial.*

First, what did the “young man dressed in white,” which by all accounts was an angel, ask the three women to do?

- a. Go tell the disciples and Peter
- b. They were to go tell them that Jesus was going to be in Galilee and that the disciples would see Him there as Jesus had said.
- c. What would you have done? The women were terrified. They left and didn’t say a word.
- d. What were they called to be? Witnesses. They were to witnesses to what they saw and experienced.

O. S. Hawkins says, “A witness is a person who simply tells others what they have seen or heard. They share with others about their firsthand experience.”

- e. That is what we are to do. To be witnesses to what Christ has done for us. Yes, it can be a frightful thing. But, remember we have inside us the Holy Spirit that will help us if we will take the step of faith.
- f. We don’t have to know every scripture, be a Bible Scholar, or a preacher. We just have to tell of Jesus’ incredible love for us and for others. The Holy Spirit does the rest.
 - We are not recruiting people to join our club
 - We are not asking people to buy our product
 - We simply are to be Jesus’ witnesses

Then in Mark 14:8 did you catch that first part: “She did what she could.”

- a. Some of us can do more than others but that’s not the criteria for doing.
- b. We are to do what we can. That’s why we are called the “body of Christ.” We have a part and can do what we can. We are expected to use the gifts we have been given for Kingdom work.

With that, let me express my thanks to the church for what you are doing in our community. We can’t fix everything or meet every need but we can meet some needs. Thanks for calling and checking on each other and me. Thanks for the things you are making or the food you provide to others. Thanks for the things you are doing that only you and God know about.

I pray that one day we will be able to look back and say that this was one of the best Easters ever because people turned back to God and we learned to love and take care of each other. We saw God do something that only He

could do. May God bless you on this Easter Day as we honor his Son, the Savior of the world. Amen and Amen.

10) Prayer Concerns: Linda Holson, Karen Martin, Ann Keefer, Judy Draper, Brenda Stam, Ellis Hise, those suffering from the effects of the coronavirus, our nations' leaders, and that the church would rise up in revival and be used powerfully by God to bring salvation and healing to our land.

11) End with **The Lord's Prayer** and prayer for others/nation and a hymn or song.

Benediction: Ephesians 3:20-21 (NIV)

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,

²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Pastor Tim