

Easter Sunday - A (2026)

Acts 10:34-43

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

Colossians 3:1-4

Matthew 28:1-10

‘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.”’ In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

It seems to me that there are a handful of Sundays when we gather for worship where the text for the season/event must stand on its own; there is no way to describe it in such a way that fully explains what took place. We take it in faith that the events and people described in these various stories are part of God’s much larger story of salvation, events and people God has used over time to help reveal himself and his plan for the redemption of all of creation. How does one ‘explain’ the virgin birth where the power of the Holy Spirit overshadowed a young, virgin, and betrothed girl to be used as the vessel for the birth of Immanuel, God with us? Or on Trinity Sunday, where try as we might, many preachers try to explain how three is one and one is three; how the Godhead is both separate yet unified? And what about Pentecost Sunday, where the account from the Acts of the Apostles speaks of a violent wind and where divided tongues as of fire appeared among the disciples and rested on each of them?

As believing followers of Christ, we accept the truth of these stories even when the ‘explanation’ of ‘how’ they happened is impossible to fully understand. We accept these stories as true because they are part and parcel of our Christian heritage contained within our sacred scriptures.

This Sunday gives us another one of those events that can’t be fully explained but whose truth is nonetheless undeniable. Today’s story of the resurrection is a story that stands on its own and is to be believed not because we can explain exactly what happened that Sunday morning, but because scripture tells us of witnesses to its reality. The angel says it all: “He is not here; for he has been raised as he said.”

The hymn writer who lived in the mid-19th century, Henry Alford, penned the words to a very familiar hymn which is part of the Easter collection in our Episcopal hymnal, *'We Walk by Faith.....'* *'We walk by faith, and not by sight; no gracious words we hear from him who spoke as none e'er spoke; but we believe him near. We may not touch his hands and side, nor follow where he trod/but in his promise we rejoice, and cry, "My Lord and God."* That's what we're being asked to do today, to 'walk by faith', to accept this truth of Jesus rising from the dead because, quite simply, it's **true**. It's been true, and it will continue to be true. If it were not so, as the apostle Paul so aptly put it, "If it is just for this life that we have hoped in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men."

The truth of Jesus' rising from the dead is found in numerous manifestations. First, look at the lives of those who believe; they live with joy and hope at the root of their being. They walk in ways of peace and compassion. They seek justice and offer themselves in humble service to others. They look for paths of reconciliation, not seeking to be 'right' at someone else's expense, and are bound by a love that honors the innate presence of God in others and who willingly accept Jesus' teaching that the first shall be last and the last shall be first. Walking in the ways of faith and belief matters because it shapes how we live in the present while looking forward in hope of the promise of tomorrow.

The truth of Jesus rising from the dead was foretold in Hebrew scriptures and affirmed by story after story, witness after witness, and transformed life by transformed life in the New Testament. Once again, the apostle Paul recounts in his letter to the Corinthians the truth of Jesus' rising from the dead in that some 500 people saw him after his resurrection.

The accounts of the two confused and disappointed disciples whom Jesus met on the road to Emmaus, whose hearts burned within them upon recognizing that they had been in the presence of the risen Jesus, along with Mary's encounter at the empty tomb, both reveal the presence of the risen Lord. Even our dear friend 'Doubting Thomas' encounter with the risen Jesus bears witness to this reality. Each of the evangelists writes of the resurrection of Jesus with changes in detail among them. People talked, others listened, others retold the stories, others

experienced the transformation in their souls, and the process started all over again. This is why it's true: because people's lives have changed over the past 2,000 years.

All of this leads me back to the scene at the tomb in Matthew's gospel. Two devoted followers of Jesus, Mary and the 'other' Mary, went to see the tomb that Sunday morning. The earth shook, and an angel of the Lord appeared; his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. Matthew tells us that out of fear, the guards became like dead men, scared stiff. But the angel reassures these two women not to be afraid; he knows why they have come. What follows are some of the clearest directions given to evangelize the world: The angel tells the women to 'come, see, go and tell.' 'Come and see' is the ongoing invitation to all who seek to encounter the truth of the risen Christ. 'Go and tell' is the perfect response to what we've encountered. The resurrection of Jesus is true because many have responded to the invitation and have been changed by the experience. To 'go and tell' serves as another witness's proclamation to an experience that is otherwise unexplainable.

It's been seven weeks since the Church put away the 'Alleluias' and contemplated the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. It was a period of sober reflection and a week where evil seemed to have won the day. But today points to the reality that the light of the resurrection always wins. The light always overcomes the darkness of our individual lives filled with doubt and challenges. No matter our lot in life at this moment, the light of the resurrection reveals to us that God is in control; good triumphs over evil, and hope truly does spring eternal.

The truth of the resurrection of Jesus is the definitive declaration of God's victory over sin and death, over any and everything that binds us to the ways of the world. We are the grateful recipients of this unexplainable reality. Therefore, today is not a day to try to explain' what happened. We will explore the implications of this truth for our lives and how this truth continually shapes this community of faith over the next weeks and months. Today, though, is a day of celebration because the theme of this day is joy and gladness grounded in a story that is true. Hear the words from John of Damascus, a 7th-century monk, priest, and hymnographer: *'The day of resurrection, earth tell it out abroad/the Passover of gladness, the*

Passover of God/From death to life eternal, from earth unto the sky/our Christ hath brought us over with hymns of victory. Now let the heavens be joyful, let earth her song begin/the round world keeps high triumph, and all that is therein/let all things seen and unseen their notes together blend/for Christ the Lord is risen, our joy that hath no end.'

It's true, my friends. And because it's true, we can joyfully proclaim, "Alleluia, Christ is risen....he is risen indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!"