

EASTER

April 12, 2020

audio transcript



PRELUDE

Chorale prelude on VICTORY
(*The Strife Is O'er the Battle Done*, ELW 366)
Benjamin Culli (b. 1975)

WELCOME

P: This is the day the Lord has made! Christ is risen, and through him all creation is made new! Indeed, "God shows no partiality" (Acts 10:34): Christ's resurrection brings life to everyone. We sing hymns of praise, gather around sacred words in spirit even as we remain apart, and proclaim God's faithfulness, power, and love. With the women at the tomb, we are astonished, elated, and grateful. We depart with joy to proclaim the good news of God's endless love.

We are delighted this morning to feature our bishop, the Rev. Shelley Bryan Wee, who will be preaching the Easter message.

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

P: Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism,
we are raised with him to new life.

Let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

We give you thanks, O God,
for in the beginning you created us in your image
and planted us in a well-watered garden.
In the desert you promised pools of water for the parched,
and you gave us water from the rock.

When we did not know the way,
you sent the Good Shepherd to lead us to still waters.
At the cross, you watered us from Jesus' wounded side,
and on this day, you shower us again with the water of life.

We praise you for your salvation through water,
for the water in this font,
and for all water everywhere.

Bathe us in your forgiveness, grace, and love.
Satisfy the thirsty, and give us the life only you can give.

To you be given honor and praise
through Jesus Christ our Lord
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

HYMN (*page 10*)

Jesus Christ Is Risen Today, ELW 365

GREETING

P: Alleluia! Christ is risen.

C: **Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the
Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: **And also with you.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray.

O God, you gave up your only Son to join us in death
and out of death bring new life.

Make us die every day to sin,

that we may live with him forever in the joy of the resurrection,

through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Sung by Cantor Kyle

HOLY GOSPEL

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 28th chapter

C: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

¹After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ²And 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. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. ⁵But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷Then 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." ⁸So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: **Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON

Bishop Shelley Bryan-Wee

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen, indeed!

Alleluia!

Wow. I have never experienced an Easter like this. I assume you haven't either. I want to say right now on this Easter Sunday in the midst of this coronavirus pandemic, I'm not interested in giving you false hope. I'm not interested in telling you that things are going to get better when I don't know when things are going to get better.

We are living in a time that I never expected or wanted, and my heart breaks for all of those who are sick, who are grieving the death of loved ones, who are financially strapped, who are worried about family members and loved ones that they can't get to.... I am *not* going to stand here today and tell you that the earth is stable and that things are not rocking around us.

But this is what I *will* say to you:

The women who went to the tomb on that first Easter morning--they also experienced a rocking world. They came not with alleluias and Easter lilies, or really with any hope at all. And when they looked into the tomb, they saw emptiness; nothing else.

And the disciples who weren't with the women at the grave? Well as far as we know they were hiding out in a room somewhere, scared.

Well it says in the Gospel of Matthew that the first earthquake happened when Jesus died on the cross, and the second earthquake happened when the stone was rolled away from the tomb. I think we can sense from the Gospel reading today that the women and men *still felt the earth shaking beneath them* even though the earthquake had happened earlier.

Then we hear these surprising words from the angels in the tomb to the women:

The angels said, "Do not be afraid." (Angels always say that, right?) But here they say it again, "Do not be afraid. 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.' This is my message for you."

And after the women glanced in the tomb and saw nothing--or maybe everything--they ran to tell the disciples and on their way, as we hear in Matthew, they encountered Jesus again, who also said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers." And we know that when they arrived at the disciples' door and breathlessly told them what they had seen and heard and experienced, the men were also filled with expectation and promise.

As I said earlier, I'm not here to give you false hope. I'm not here to give you false promises. But this is what I am here to proclaim to you today:

Just as these women and just as these men experienced the death and resurrection of Jesus, we do too, today, in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

For you see, Easter isn't some memory that we collectively remember. We don't remember an event that happened 2000 years ago and because of some long-ago story, that's why we dress up and wear hats and hunt eggs and eat ham. No!

For us, even though we are fearful and anxiety-ridden, even though we wake up at 3 AM wondering what's going to happen, we are at our core Resurrection People.

Yes we know death--and yes, we know resurrection. We acknowledge that death stinks, that we hate death, and at the same time we are people who proclaim along with the angels, along with the women, along with the disciples, along with Jesus:

"Do not be afraid. Jesus has been raised from the dead."

Jesus' resurrection we celebrate today is not some distant memory, but something we live and move and breathe in, even--maybe even most especially--when death is staring at us, when the earth is shaking on its foundations.

For you see, the promise of Jesus is made in the face of life as it is. It's not some utopia, it's not some pie in the sky; we are promised Jesus' love and grace, presence and all things in the messiness and chaos of life, *especially* in the messiness and chaos of life.

Especially when the earth is shaking beneath us.

There is no doubt that as a society and a world we will be changed from this covid-19 experience. While I would hope that we would be changed for the better, as a person who understands and fully acknowledges sin, I know that it could also be worse.

But here's the thing:

In the cross, in the grave, and in the resurrection, we are given ultimate hope through Jesus. You are loved and cared for and carried by Jesus.

And because we know this ultimate hope, we are called to be hope for this world. We are called to proclaim this hope for those who only see emptiness rather than the empty tomb.

Maybe this is what the emptiness of our churches show us today. While we would all love to be crowded together, singing loudly, "Jesus Christ is ris'n today," maybe the empty church is showing us *the empty tomb*.

Maybe God is calling us, like the women at the tomb, to not be afraid, to trust that Jesus is raised and here no matter what!

Maybe God is calling us to go and tell others this amazing good news: that God loves *you* and cares for *you*, and God is working for good *even right now*.

Maybe we are to see with new eyes what this empty tomb is all about. For maybe, maybe, like the women at the tomb, where we see nothing, God is showing us *everything*.

Today we celebrate that when the stone was rolled away, and the earth shook, and the tomb was empty, that a new world was born, a new world that continues today, a world where death does not have the last word. A world where injustice is made right; a new world where polarization, and hoarding resources, and the love of money, and nationalism, and racism, and classism, and hatred of all kinds dies--and God's love abounds! A world where forgiveness is freely given through God's amazing love! A world where we are promised that Jesus is with us through *all* things, even on this strange Easter Sunday, even when we might feel alone and fearful, and that our world is rocking.

Remember always that you are God's beloved, that Jesus is with you, and I say to you along with the angels:

"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."

May this hope, may this promise, be held closely to you, even when the world seems shaky.

For Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed!

Alleluia!

HYMN OF THE DAY (*page 11*)*Voices Raised to You*, ELW 845

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

P: Uplifted by the promised hope of healing and resurrection, we join the people of God in all times and places in praying for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

P: God of resurrection, from the very beginning you have called women to be your witnesses: preachers, teachers, and leaders. Open our ears to their proclamation this day and always. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

P: All your creation praises you – the earth hums, the seas pulse, the stars shine, and the galaxies whirl in glorious harmonies to honor you. Let us hear and blend our voices in song. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

P: The countries of the world experience disunity and conflict; we set our minds on fear and greed rather than on your rule of justice and steadfast love. Build up all countries on your cornerstone of peace. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

P: In spite of the resurrection we weep nevertheless with those who weep, and mourn with those who mourn. Cradle the fearful, and the suffering, and the dying, assuring them of your loving presence to every victim of COVID-19. Help us in these days of dispersion to find ways creatively to care for those in need. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

P: For who or what else do the people of God pray?

Silence is given for prayer

P: Holy God, you gather us even as we are apart. Be this day with members of our faith family separated from loved ones. Bring those who are overseas back to safety. We pray as well for those no longer able to work, including health care professionals in hospitals, in pharmacies, and in other care facilities. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Risen Lord, you went ahead of us into the grave and defeated the powers of evil. We remember those who have died, including from this past week Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who died on April 9, 1945. Inspire us to live our lives in this resurrection hope and draw us to you in our final days. Lord, in your mercy,

C: **hear our prayer.**

P: With bold confidence in your love, almighty God, we place all for whom we pray into your eternal care; through Christ our Lord.

C: **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

C: **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.

BLESSING

P: May the One who brought forth Jesus from the dead
raise you to new life, fill you with hope,
and turn your mourning into dancing.

Almighty God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit,
bless you now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

P: Christ is risen, just as he said.

Go in peace. Share the good news. Alleluia!

C: **Thanks be to God. Alleluia!**

POSTLUDE

Toccata (from Symphony for Organ No. 5)
Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937)



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Guest Preacher	Bishop Shelley Bryan Wee
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Our thanks to Marc Oplinger, who helped with recording our Holy Week services, and to Todd Bishop who edited the video for our Easter service.

Jesus Christ Is Risen Today

1 Je - sus Christ is ris'n to - day, Al - le - lu - ia!
 2 Hymns of praise then let us sing, Al - le - lu - ia!
 3 But the pains which he en - dured, Al - le - lu - ia!
 4 Sing we to our God a - bove, Al - le - lu - ia!

our tri - um - phant ho - ly day, Al - le - lu - ia!
 un - to Christ, our heav'n - ly king, Al - le - lu - ia!
 our sal - va - tion have pro - cured; Al - le - lu - ia!
 praise e - ter - nal as his love; Al - le - lu - ia!

who did once up - on the cross, Al - le - lu - ia!
 who en - dured the cross and grave, Al - le - lu - ia!
 now a - bove the sky he's king, Al - le - lu - ia!
 praise him, all you heav'n - ly host, Al - le - lu - ia!

suf - fer to re - deem our loss. Al - le - lu - ia!
 sin - ners to re - deem and save. Al - le - lu - ia!
 where the an - gels ev - er sing. Al - le - lu - ia!
 Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Ghost. Al - le - lu - ia!

Voices Raised to You

1 Voic - es raised to you we of - fer; tune them, God, for
 2 All cre - a - tion joins to praise you; earth and sky your
 3 Christ, the song of love in - car - nate, touch - ing earth with
 4 Spir - it, flam - ing through cre - a - tion, kin - dle faith with -
 5 How can an - y praise we of - fer mea - sure all the

songs of praise. Hearts and hands we bring in trib - ute
 works dis - play. Art and mu - sic, gifts you lend us,
 heav - en's grace, for your liv - ing, suf - f'ring, dy - ing,
 in each heart. Lift our voic - es high in cho - rus;
 thanks we owe? Take our hearts and hands and voic - es—

for your gifts through all our days. Al - le - lu - ia!
 we re - turn to you to - day. Al - le - lu - ia!
 for your ris - ing, hear our praise! Al - le - lu - ia!
 through our hands your love im - part. Al - le - lu - ia!
 gifts of love we can be - stow. Al - le - lu - ia!

Al - le - lu - ia! Tri - une God, to you we sing!
 Al - le - lu - ia! God, cre - a - tor, source of life!
 Al - le - lu - ia! Christ, re - deem - er, Lord of life!
 Al - le - lu - ia! Spir - it, help - er, breath of life!
 Al - le - lu - ia! Tri - une God, to you we sing!

Text: Herman G. Stuempfle Jr., b. 1923

Music: SONG OF PRAISE, Carolyn Jennings, b. 1936

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