

Easter Meditation 2020

Pastors Melinda Wagner & Aaron Couch
First Immanuel Lutheran, Portland, Oregon
April 12, 2020

Christ is Risen! **He is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

Let us pray.

God of life, God of new life, we praise you for this day of such bright promise and hope. We praise you for Jesus, risen from the dead, who leads us in the way of life and peace. We give thanks for this community of faith, where we experience your mercy, your compassion and forgiveness. We pray that you will fill all our days with patience and joy, with courage and peace. Send your Spirit to help us care for each other well, with encouragement and comfort. We pray in the name of our risen Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Reflections

Easter is different this year. But as someone reminded us: *“The first Easter didn’t happen at a church. It happened outside of an empty tomb, while all the disciples were sequestered in a home, grief-stricken and wondering what was going on. So it turns out we are all keeping things pretty biblical this Easter.”*

So true. This is a different kind of resurrection celebration.

We are missing the smell of delicious pancakes and sausages in Fellowship Hall. The feeling of sticky syrup on our fingers, the taste of hot coffee and orange juice. The happy rush of the children’s egg hunt, big kids climbing trees to reach the highest eggs, little kids toddling across the lawn.

We miss the electric energy of a full Easter sanctuary. Trumpets, organ and choir. Triumphant Easter hymns. The good news preached. The taste of bread and wine. The all-out exuberance of singing the Hallelujah Chorus together.

We miss these familiar resurrection rituals, but we will share them again one day, on the other side of today’s troubles. In the meantime, our resurrection joy today is quieter but no less real. Today we are wholeheartedly grateful to be God’s people, and to honor God’s Easter victory. We are ready to hear the good news and celebrate our Risen Lord.

Scripture -- Matthew 28:1-10

The Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew, the 28th chapter:

28 ¹⁻⁴ *After the Sabbath, as the first light of the new week dawned, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to keep vigil at the tomb. Suddenly the earth reeled and rocked under their feet as God's angel came down from heaven, came right up to where they were standing. He rolled back the stone and then sat on it. Shafts of lightning blazed from him. His garments shimmered snow-white. The guards at the tomb were scared to death. They were so frightened, they couldn't move.*

⁵⁻⁶ *The angel spoke to the women: "There is nothing to fear here. I know you're looking for Jesus, the One they nailed to the cross. He is not here. He was raised, just as he said. Come and look at the place where he was placed.*

⁷ *"Now, get on your way quickly and tell his disciples, '**He is risen from the dead.** He is going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there.' That's the message."*

⁸⁻¹⁰ *The women, deep in wonder and full of joy, lost no time in leaving the tomb. They ran to tell the disciples. Then Jesus met them, stopping them in their tracks. "**Good morning!**" he said. They fell to their knees, embraced his feet, and worshiped him. Jesus said, "You're holding on to me for dear life! Don't be frightened like that. Go tell my brothers that they are to go to Galilee, and that I'll meet them there." (Message version)*

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

There were so many miraculous signs that morning— earthquake, lightning, an angel. But instead of reassuring the women at that tomb, these things scared everyone half to death! Two words came to them, to bring good news.

The first word came from the angel: "**He is risen from the dead.**" That message seemed unbelievable, impossible, to the grieving women.

It was the second word that brought the truth home. Jesus himself appeared and simply said: "**Good morning.**" And then, they knew. The resurrection was real.

Good morning. Those words have never been so welcome as they are this Easter.

Good morning. Spoken by our Risen Lord, opening a new day for all people.

Dear friends in Christ, this **is** a good morning. It is the **best** morning. This morning is **good all the way through**. Because this Easter morning shows us that **God's goodness** is more powerful than anything.

Jesus rising from the dead is **God's goodness** overcoming all evil, all sin, all cruelty, and every kind of death, to hold us in God's love forever.

Easter is a **good morning**.

In fact, Easter is the **good morning** our hurting world is longing for.

May we hold the profound **goodness** of this Easter morning close in our hearts through all the days ahead.

May we let the **good news of Christ risen from the grave** be our hope, our anchor, our courage, our holy perspective when fear or worry threatens.

May it be that every time we wish another person **Good morning** – we let the risen Jesus speak goodness again to us, and speak goodness through us to others.

And each time the sun rises, may we wish **Good morning** to God's beloved world, this precious world Christ gave his life for, this beautiful family of humanity for whom God raised Jesus up, and whom God will never abandon.

Good morning, people of Christ. **Good morning. Happy Easter.** Amen.

FILC Happy Easter Video by Ryan Traetow

(Thank you Ryan for creating this amazing work of love! It can now be viewed at www.firstimmanueluth.org)

Closing Blessing

May the power of Christ's resurrection fill your hearts with hope and strength.

May the peace of Christ's presence fill your minds with peace and joy.

May the proclamation of Christ's victory over death give your courage and perspective to live all your days following Christ's way of compassion, forgiveness and justice.

In the name of Christ, Amen.