

# Sermon For Easter Sunday, April 16, 2017 - "Practicing Resurrection"

The Resurrection of Our Lord, Easter Day  
April 16, 2017  
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
Decorah, Iowa  
Rev. Amy Zalk Larson

[Click here to read scripture passages for the day.](#)

## Practicing Resurrection

Beloved of God, grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus, the life of the world.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary go to see the tomb. They go to see where their friend is buried, perhaps hoping to come to terms with the reality of it all. Their hope has been killed. Death and fear have prevailed.

At the tomb, more fearful things happen. There's an earthquake as a terrifying angel rolls the stone of the tomb away. The angel is so frightening that the guards shake and collapse. Fear prevails.

But the angel gives the two women a message: Do not be afraid. Jesus is not here. He has been raised. Go and tell the disciples that he is going ahead of you.

After they receive this message, the women leave the tomb quickly with fear and great joy. The fear is still there but now it is accompanied by joy. Something new arises. They experience joy; they know new life within themselves. Resurrection happens, not only to Jesus, but to them. It happens not only for the one inside the tomb, but also for the women standing outside the tomb.

Which means - resurrection is not only what happens to Jesus, and to us, after we die. Resurrection is not only for those who have died an earthly death. It happens to us, now. It is for us, for the living.

Resurrection is for us who stand at the graves of those we love. It is for us who wonder if fear and death will prevail, for us who are not in the tomb and yet experience death in so many ways even as we live - deaths that come in the form of grief, betrayals, broken relationships, shattered dreams, violated trust, diminished capacities, loss of purpose, terror, despair about the state of the world.

Resurrection is for us who are experiencing death outside the tomb, like the women on that first Easter.

Resurrection happens to them through the message the angel has for them.

Today there is a resurrection message for all of us as well: Do not be afraid. Jesus is raised and goes ahead of you leading you into new life - a life marked, yes, by fear but also by great joy. Resurrection does not mean that pain and fear disappear. It means that hope and joy arise for you and within you, that new life emerges from you for the sake of the world. Resurrection means that even though they seem so strong, death and fear have not won, will not prevail. God cannot be stopped from breathing new life, from responding to death with resurrection.

Resurrection is for you. It is for you to experience, for you to live into, now. You can claim this resurrection for yourself as those women did long ago. You can walk into it, act on it, leave here still afraid but also full of great joy. You can share new life with others as the women did for the disciples. Resurrection happens to you, resurrection is for you.

But how do we experience resurrection? What does it mean to be a people who live into resurrection? People who claim this message for ourselves?

It means we look for resurrection like children scouring the house for Easter eggs. We look for life emerging, joy arising, for God breathing new life into all things. We practice rising up when life has knocked us flat.

We notice, name and nurture signs of the new life God brings. We point out when resurrection happens and practice living into it.

Resurrection happens when something breaks open our hearts and healing tears flow. We claim it when we listen to poet Wendell Berry and choose to, “be joyful though we have considered all the facts.”

We see resurrection as daffodils emerge through the soil, new buds appear on trees and the sun warms our grateful faces. We practice it when we raise our faces up, sun or no, to look around, to smile at one another. We undergo resurrection in baptism and when we remember what happens in those waters - we die to sin, we’re raised to new life and we’re called beloved of God. We live into resurrection when we choose to treat each person as beloved of God.

We experience resurrection when someone speaks gracious words of truth that open up new possibilities in our thinking. We claim resurrection for ourselves when we choose to listen, to soften, to seek understanding.

Resurrection happens when we hear words of forgiveness after every single confession - as we are set free from sin and raised to new life. We taste resurrection when we take the bread and the cup – signs of Jesus’ death – and put them in our bodies, making us into the body of Christ for the sake of God’s world. We practice it when we offer forgiveness and offer ourselves in love for God’s world.

We experience resurrection after we’ve lost patience with a child and the next morning begins with their unconditional love. We practice resurrection when we say “yes” to another attempt at a difficult relationship, when we bring a meal, plant a tree, or fold the laundry of someone experiencing death.

Where have you experienced resurrection recently? What has helped you to claim it for yourself, to practice it? What do you need to be able to live into resurrection? I’d love to hear. This community would love to hear. Together, we practice resurrection. Together we hear a message for us, we are fed, we are assured that Jesus goes before us into life for us and for the world.

Resurrection is not just about what happens when we die.  
Resurrection is about how we, as the people of God, *live*.

Let’s live into resurrection together.

Amen.