

# Sermon for Easter Sunday, April 12, 2020 - "He Is Not (Bound) Here!"

Easter Sunday - Online Service  
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
Decorah, Iowa  
Rev. Amy Zalk Larson

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

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

Where is God amidst this global pandemic?

Where will we find hope, love, life in these times?

Where will we experience Jesus, who is God with us, in the flesh when we can't gather for worship? Where will we find Jesus?

The women expect to find Jesus at the tomb.

They go there to see him, to honor his body.

Their world has turned upside down, all their hopes are dashed.

They are grief-stricken and afraid.

They need to see Jesus. They go where they expect to find him.

Instead, the world continues to shake. An angel appears and says, "Do not be afraid, I know you are looking for Jesus ... he is not here. He has been raised ... he is going ahead of you ... there you will see him."

We are a lot like the women on that first Easter morning. Our world is shaking, turned upside down. Our hopes and plans have been dashed. We carry such fear and anxiety. In the midst of all of this, we want to see Jesus. We want to honor Jesus' body by being *with* his body, the body of Christ; we want to receive his body and blood in Holy Communion. We want to see Jesus.

We want to be here in this place where we know we will encounter Jesus in word and sacrament, music and prayer and the gathered community. This is where we expect to find Jesus.

Yet, beloved of God, he is not here, he has been raised, he is going ahead of you. There you will see him. He is not here. He has been raised. Which is to say, Jesus is not contained in this space, in this place, in all the places where we expect to encounter him.

Jesus has been raised from the dead and is now everywhere present. He is alive and on the loose and out and about in the world. So, Jesus is here, yes, because he's everywhere; but he is not *ONLY* here, he is not bound here. Death cannot contain him, buildings cannot contain him, the ways we are accustomed to encountering him cannot contain him. God is on the loose, love is on the loose.

There is nowhere that God is not.

The women don't encounter Jesus at the tomb where they expect to find him, but that doesn't mean he isn't also in places of death, that he isn't with us in our tombs of grief and sorrow. The risen Jesus is there, even there, but not contained there.

When the angel rolls away the stone, Jesus doesn't walk out then. He is already up, already out breaking the power of death, working new life. Stones cannot stop him. Death cannot stop him from being at work in our world.

Where is God? With us in places of death and fear AND already working on the other side of them. Even when God seems absent, God is alive and on the loose. Even when we cannot yet see how, God is already out, already working on the other side of all of this.

Do not be afraid. You are looking for Jesus; he is not here, he has been raised from the dead. Jesus is not contained here, not bound here or anywhere. He has been raised. AND, He is going ahead of you, there you will see him.

The angel tells the women, "He is going ahead of you *to Galilea*, there you will see him." Galilea means home to them, everyday life. How astonishing to think they will find Jesus there! After all the turmoil the women have just experienced in Jerusalem, it must be strange to imagine that they will ever return to their everyday lives, much less encounter Jesus there. Yet, they are promised they will encounter Jesus in the place they call home, in the midst of everyday life.

This is the promise for you as well today.

Today Jesus is with you in your home - in that place where you now spend so much of your life. Isolated in your home, separated from so many you love, you are never separated from Christ Jesus. Jesus is with you, even there, always there. And through him, we are united with those we love and long for, both in heaven and on earth. Amidst all the turmoil of this time, Jesus is with you.

Jesus is with you AND he is going ahead of you, just as the angel promised the women. Jesus is going ahead of you into all that this life holds. This means that you also are not bound by fear and sorrow and death. This means that you can know great joy even amidst your fear.

That's how the women left the tomb after all - we're told they left with both fear and great joy. The angel's promise, "He is going before you, there you will see him" - this set them free to follow Jesus joyfully even as they were afraid.

Jesus goes before you as well. You also are set free to follow Jesus, to love and serve and hope and give, even as joy and fear entwine within you. You can persist, you can carry on, you can keep the faith for Jesus goes ahead of you.

Where is God in these days? God made flesh in Jesus is everywhere present - in places of death and fear, in your home, at loose in the world. He is with you always, everywhere. He goes before you. You can follow him joyfully even when you are afraid.

Jesus is not bound here. He has been raised. He goes ahead of you. There you will see him.

Let's take a moment for silent prayer.