

Powerpoint: Mark 16:1-9

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.

As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

Powerpoint: Children's Lesson**Powerpoint: Gone to Galilee**

Matthew 28:7 "Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

Powerpoint: *Images of happy, sunny SECULAR Easter decorations and events.*

We're all going to die. That's right. We all take our turn in the casket.

"Oh, come on now, preacher, it's Easter! Don't be so negative. Say something happy!"

Well, perhaps I could talk about beautiful sunshine, green grass, trees budding, birds chirping and Easter flowers blooming. And these would be happy thoughts. But in reality, they aren't lasting. I mean, snow this past week! We were so ready for a warm spring Easter. But no, we met at the beach for the sunrise service at 39 degrees! See? Nice, happy Easter thoughts—thoughts of family time together, kids excited, chocolate eggs and hearty ham meals—happy thoughts quickly fade. It could very well be that in the not too distant future, it just might snow again. In reality, all the warm fuzzys of Easter don't last.

Powerpoint: *Image of a casket or gravestone, surrounded by images of Easter lilies.*

But death: now that's real. And it's for certain. It applies to everyone. Absolutely everyone. And it applies to you. Some day you too will breath life's last breath. In fact, death is the one and only thing all people of all times of all places share. Some people never get to be born. Some never breath. But absolutely everyone dies. Most of us spent the last few weeks getting ready for Easter by....working on our taxes! How does the saying go? "Nothing is absolutely certain except death and taxes." We laugh at the joke made about taxes, but if you notice, the joke turns on the somber reality that death is the one thing that is absolutely certain.

Powerpoint: *Image of a casket or gravestone, with the background being a tax form.*

I've read that some doctors are suggesting that from the moment you are born you are in the process of dying. Others suggest that somewhere around the age of 14 our bodies begin to decline faster than they grow. So, all of us who are over the age of 14 are actually "over the hill" and heading down the other side toward the grave. And you were dreading turning 40!

Powerpoint: Death, loss and defeat are:

- Real
- Certain

And we've been living with death quite a lot, if you think about it. Think in your own lives, who do you know that has died recently. It doesn't take too long to remember some, does it? Or who of you right now is staring death in the face...having heard scary diagnoses, or gotten the phone call from a family member or dear friend who had some hard news to tell you, or who have had to make some very hard decisions about a loved one's long term care. We've had to say goodbye to some very important people in our lives. It's hard. Not too long ago we grappled right here in church with how to live like we are dying...because, after all, we are

Powerpoint: Death, loss and defeat are:

- Real
- Certain
- Common

So, although we never really think about it this way, the truth is that death seems to be the most common thing of life. There is nothing exceptional or abnormal about death. Yes, the death of a loved one stings like nothing else, and it is so unnerving as we face it in our own lives, but *it is not unique*. Funerals are frighteningly common. We will all die.

In the ordinary world, the world where we make our homes, everything that lives, dies. The foundational law of physics is that everything tends toward decay. This is the ordinary fact of life.

But Easter: now that is *not* ordinary. Let's see, Jesus lived. OK. He died. I understand. He was buried. So far, makes sense. We can all get it. Common. But on the third day, He rose again. What? Hold it! What did you say? Rose again? Totally abnormal. I mean, come on.

Powerpoint: Death/defeat: Certain and Normal.

Easter/resurreccion: Exceptional and Abnormal.

We've all been to funerals. But how many of you have ever seen someone raised from the dead? Now, I'm talking way dead—not just someone's heart having stopped beating for a couple of minutes. I mean *dead since last Friday, dead*. That's right. None of us has ever seen that. That is so exceptional we leave it in the realm of impossible. "Possible" is for those ailing, but alive. Seek better medicine or treatment. Try a different doctor or hospital. But when it's over, its over. Done.

So Easter is anything but common. Jesus raised from the dead. Now that's hard to believe. But right there it is, in the Bible.

Powerpoint: Mark 16:1-8

- 1-4: Go to the tomb
- 5-7: Extraordinary news
- 8: Rush away shocked

Turn again to Mark 16. Notice the three parts. The women go to the tomb (vv. 1-4). The angel there gives them some extraordinary news (vv.5-7). The women rush away shocked (v.8). You know what I like about this? This is the way I experience Easter. The women don't actually *see* the risen Jesus. They are just told about it. The angel says "He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay." Then they go to tell others.

Powerpoint: *Image of the women at the tomb with the angel, with the caption, “The first Easter, they first HEAR that Jesus is alive, and then are told to tell others.”*

Now, before too long, they do meet Jesus. But I really like how this says it. This is how we experience Easter. We don’t actually see the risen Lord. We just hear the report: “Jesus, who was dead, is not here. He has risen. Now go, tell the others.” And that’s what we hear again this Sunday in church as we gather to celebrate Easter. We hear that Jesus is not dead but instead has risen from the grave. And we, too, like the women, obey the command and rush away to tell everyone else. This is our Easter celebration.

Powerpoint: Mark 16: Mark 16:7 “But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”
Matthew 26:32 “But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”

But there is also something else important here. Look closely at verse seven. The angel tells the women, “Then go quickly and his disciples, “He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see Him.” This hearkens back to Matthew 26:32 where Jesus, in after the Lord’s Supper, told His disciples, “But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.” And now, the angel says that Jesus has “Gone on ahead to Galilee.”

Powerpoint: *Map of Israel, with arrows pointing to Jerusalem and Galilee.*

Do you know where Galilee is? Well, it’s nowhere special. Certainly nothing like important Jerusalem. Yes, Galilee it is in northern Israel—where Jesus grew up and lived. It is where Nazareth is, the hometown of Jesus. It is where Capernaum is, the home town of the fishermen, and where Jesus lived the last three years. Galilee is where they had lived out their daily lives.

Powerpoint: The uncommon, risen Jesus goes ahead into common Galilee.

Why would the risen Christ, the very first thing, just hours after being raised from the dead, head for Galilee? There is nothing special about Galilee....*But maybe that’s the point.* The extraordinarily raised-from-the-dead Christ goes back to the ordinary Galilee.

Powerpoint: The uncommon, risen Jesus goes ahead into common Galilee.

Easter is unusual, but it’s purpose is to affect the usual.

Easter is unusual, but it’s purpose is to affect the usual. The risen Christ goes into the ordinary, the common, and takes back there His extra-ordinary, His uncommon victory. Jesus stands resurrected in the normal parts of where we live our everyday lives.

Powerpoint: *Image of Jesus making breakfast on the shore of Galilee.*

That’s why for our Sunrise Service this morning, we met down at the beach. You see, after Easter, the disciples went back to Galilee, and even when back to fishing. But there, right there, is where Jesus met them. He met them on the beach back in their ordinary lives.

And He’s doing ordinary things. Jesus first appears to His disciples when they are gathered in the room together, then talks with them on the road to Emmaus, then while fishing, He gives them

fishing advice. He then cooks them breakfast, sits down with them, and eats with them. On the shore. We did that this morning, too. Yep, we even had fish, just like when Jesus appeared to them.

Powerpoint: *Image of the empty tomb, with the neatly folded cloths clearly visible.*

Do you remember in the Gospel of John that when the disciples peer into the empty tomb they see Jesus' grave clothes neatly folded? Imagine, the first thing Jesus did after being raised by God from the dead, is to tidy up His tomb! (Now here is a Scripture for parents with teenagers!) The first thing done by the risen Christ is to make His bed and fold His clothes!

Powerpoint: The uncommon, risen Jesus goes ahead into common Galilee.

Easter is unusual, but it's purpose is to affect the usual.

The risen Christ goes back into where ordinary life is daily lived.

This extraordinary account of Jesus' resurrection is all full of ordinary things! *Exceptional Easter has something to do with what's ordinary.* The risen Christ goes back to where ordinary life is daily lived. It is there that Jesus meets His disciples. And up in Galilee, notice, they are not looking for Jesus. Instead, Jesus is there, looking for them!

Powerpoint: Easter: Jesus is looking for us!

Easter: Jesus comes to us and meets us in our common, typical lives.

That's the same Easter message for us, Jesus' disciples today. *Jesus is looking for us.* And He comes to us and meets us in our common, everyday lives. That is where the power of Easter is effective! Most of life is ordinary, very mundane, typical. This is where we make our home. And when Jesus was raised, He entered these days, these ordinary days of our lives. The Gospels show the disciples all going back to work. After all, Easter, "The first day of the week," was the Jewish workday. At the beginning of the work week after the rest of the Sabbath, they go back to what they were doing in daily life. We will, too. Tomorrow it'll all be life as usual. And it is precisely there that the risen Jesus finds *them*. And it is precisely there that the risen Jesus finds *us*!

Powerpoint: Death: What is most common and typical.

So what are our common lives full of? What is most common of all? We talked about this earlier: death! No matter how hard we work, and labor, and strive; decay and collapse finally win. All we love and work for eventually passes away. Death claims all our loved ones, and finally us, too.

Powerpoint: Death: What is most common and typical.

Easter: Jesus brings victory over the death that is so common in our lives.

But it is right here where the risen Christ brings His victory and new life. The risen Christ is raised, but He is raised into *this world*, our world, where everything that lives, dies; where death claims one by one. This is a world where death seems to be so powerful, so unstoppable.

Those of you who have gone through grief could probably testify that when someone dies, your grief is most intense in the ordinary little things in life.

Powerpoint: Death and defeat are most powerfully felt in common, daily life.

A lady shared with me that while she was in grief over the loss of her son, on a rainy, dreary day friends would often call and say, “I am thinking about you, I am sure that a day like today can be depressing for you.”

But she said that wasn’t the way it was at all. The worst days were the bright sunny days, days which were supposed to be normal, typical, the days where she spent most of her life. It was on those days that she really felt that her beloved son was no longer there. Those days hurt the most.

You go down to breakfast and suddenly become aware that a seat at the table is vacant. You see something funny on television and say, “I’ll have to tell Mary about this.” But then you remember that Mary has gone, slipped into death. You pick up the phone to ask John about some business deal, only to recall that John died last month.

It is in the ordinary, little ways that you miss them the most.

It is also in the ordinary, little ways that we remember our personal defeats, and the deaths in our own lives, too. When the junk in the closet falls out we remember how we did not get approval to buy the new home. When our new boss calls us into his office, we think how he is in our place and how we got passed over for the promotion. When our son is arrested for drunken driving, we feel the sting of failure as parents.

Powerpoint: Death and defeat are most powerfully felt in common, daily life.

Jesus was raised into the ordinary death and defeat of life.

But we have joy this Easter because our God did not leave us caught in this trap of death and decay. Jesus was raised into the ordinariness of life. Now, the ordinary has been redeemed! Death itself has been broken. Death does not have the last word. The resurrection breaks out everywhere, even in the ticking minutes of everyday life.

Powerpoint: *Beautiful image of Easter lilies.*

Last week we led worship at Birchwood Health Care Center here in town. I talked about the Easter flower. We have some here today: it’s the Easter Lily. It is white, and beautiful, and it is in the shape of a trumpet, heralding out the good news of Easter. But you know what, as much as I love them, I think that there is a much better flower. I think the best Easter flower would be the dandelion! That’s right, the dandelion. (Someone needs to go convince my neighbors about this!)

Powerpoint: *Image of either a lawn covered in dandelions, or multiple lawns covered.*

The dandelion breaks out all over the place—and is virtually unstoppable. It is not a flower imported from the Bahamas and grown in greenhouses. It is a flower in each of our own back yards—where we all live out our daily lives. And that’s the point of Easter. It breaks out all over the place, especially right where you live, especially in our daily lives.

And so, because of Easter, life is no longer just living. When we accept the risen Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior, and commit to follow Him, our lives are liberated from the trap of sin and death. We are given 1) life abundant, here, now, and 2) life eternal.

Powerpoint: *Closeup image of dandelion, with the caption, “In Jesus, God brings His new life into our lives.”*

In Jesus, God brings His new life into our lives. Where we experience death, defeat and loss, the risen Jesus appears. We have the inbreaking of His Spirit and power into our lives, right into where we struggle with death, defeat, and loss.

Yes, pain and heartache continue. They are not taken away. But we have the joy in our hearts knowing that defeat, loss and pain will win. Death does not have the final say. The power of death is broken. Jesus is alive, and He brings His new life to us.

Powerpoint: *An image of rocks/stones from early on in the Lenten sermon series.*

The most usual substance, the most common material, is probably rock. Stone is perhaps the most common stuff around. During the past few weeks, as we have journeyed to Jerusalem, we've been noticing all the stones along the way, all the stones in Scripture shouting out to us. And you know what? They are everywhere. Stones are as common in the Scriptures as they are in our world.

Powerpoint: *Image of the stone rolled away from Jesus' tomb.*

Stones are everywhere. They are most common. Interesting, isn't it, how a stone was used to seal Jesus' tomb. Common death was sealed by common stone. Typical. But Jesus, on uncommon Easter, was raised from the dead: the stone was shockingly rolled away and the tomb opened. Easter is Jesus winning the unexpected victory in our very common lives.

Powerpoint: *Image of plastic Easter eggs.*

Today each of you has an Easter egg. Inside the egg is a common stone, from around here. Shake your egg and hear the stone rattle. Let's shake all of our eggs together. [*Eggs shaking.*] Do you hear that? That is a reminder that our lives are filled with common stones. Think back over all the things the stones have been saying to us. Think how our lives are plagued each day with hardships and defeats. We experience death in so many ways. In relationships. In dreams. In hopes. In laboring. In plans. With loved ones. Death is so common. Rattle your eggs again. [*Eggs shaking.*] That stone is real. So is the loss you feel in your life. That's why we've been carrying around stones in our pockets for the last 40 days.

Powerpoint: *Blended image of stones and plastic Easter eggs.*

But, you know what? We are told on Easter, "He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see Him, just as he told you." Jesus brings the victory of His new life into the losses and deaths of your life. This is Easter.

Powerpoint: *Image of Forest Lake, or a typical MN lake, or Sea of Galilee.*

Sometime later today, I want each of you to head down to the lake. Like the disciples, I want you to find Jesus on the beach. Go out on the shore, taking your egg with you. When you are there, gazing out over the water, bring to mind a significant defeat or loss, or dead end, or death in your life. And as you think about it, rattle the stone in your egg. Hear the rattle and feel the pain. Then open the egg, and think of how on Easter, by the power of Jesus' resurrection, the tomb was opened. Take out the stone, and as you are holding it, and name your loss, out loud. By speaking it, offer it to Jesus, who is there, alive and with you. Remember how on Easter Jesus' stone was rolled away. Remember how Jesus was raised to bring you victory over death and defeat in your life. Then take

your stone and throw it as far as you can into the water, where it will sink and disappear forever. And as you do, remember the Easter message—that the risen Jesus meets us in Galilee. He rolls away the common stones of death in our lives. He takes away the defeats and deaths we live with every day.

Powerpoint: *Image of a stone hitting the water, splashing and ripples.*

Now the only thing I ask is that you be careful where you throw the stone. Please make sure you don't hit anyone, or ducks or geese that could be swimming by. But just think of all the Methodists who will be down at the shore of Forest Lake today! What a witness in our community.

You may want to do the same with the stone in your pocket, or on your dresser. Take it and throw it with all the grief and sorrow you feel in life. Throw it away, so that by the end of Easter, all you have left is the empty plastic eggshell. And then keep that eggshell instead. Put it somewhere where you will see it in the daily course of your life. And let it be a reminder to you that Jesus meets you in Galilee, that He deals with those things in your life that drag you down, that threaten to undo you...and that He gives you His power over them! Let it continue to remind you that your stone has been thrown away, gone...forever. Because of the empty tomb, it is gone. Alleluia!

Powerpoint: *Blended image of an open plastic Easter egg and Jesus' open tomb.*

Then hurry, go and tell this Good New to your neighbor!
Amen.