

Sun., April 4: Easter Worship [8:30a & 10:00a] & Holy Communion

Series: Empty

Memory Verse: “While they were discussing these things, Jesus Himself arrived and joined them on their journey.” -Luke 24:15

Message: **Empty Tomb** -Pastor David

Text: “While they were discussing these things, Jesus Himself arrived and joined them on their journey.” -Luke 24:15

Sermon Scriptures: Luke 24:13-35 (Easter on the Road to Emmaus)

Reading of Scripture: Matthew 28:1-10 (Jesus’ resurrection)

Blurb: We celebrate with fear and excitement as the women did that first Easter morning! The tomb is empty and in turn, we can fully live. Thanks be to God! What should our response be to such good news? To empty ourselves of all else so that Jesus Himself can fill us full with the Holy Spirit!

Prep: Plastic Easter Eggs, with piece of bread inside.
Holy Communion elements to each person.

[Recorded Worship Beginning]

WELCOME -Pastor Andrew

1. The Easter Proclamation:

Leader: Christ is risen!

People: He is risen indeed!

Leader: Christ is risen!

People: He is risen indeed!

Leader: Christ is risen!

People: He is risen indeed!

Alleluia!

2. Get bread and juice for Holy Communion.

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor Andrew

“While they were discussing these things, Jesus Himself arrived and joined them on their journey.” -Luke 24:15

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify

He Lives

Empty Grave

WORSHIP PRAYER -Pastor Andrew

[Live Worship Beginning]

GATHERING SONG: *Resurrecting* -Sanctify

WELCOME -Pastor David

1. The Easter Proclamation:

Leader: Christ is risen!

People: He is risen indeed!

Leader: Christ is risen!

People: He is risen indeed!

Leader: Christ is risen!

People: He is risen indeed!

Alleluia!

2. Each person today needs to have a plastic Easter egg.

Do not open it! Surprise, that we will reveal later in the serve.

Sit with expectation and excitement and expectation!

3. Today we will celebrate Holy Communion.

Open communion - open to all.

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

“While they were discussing these things, Jesus Himself arrived and joined them on their journey.” -Luke 24:15

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify

He Lives

In the Garden

Empty Grave

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

[Both Recorded & Live Worship]

SCRIPTURE READING: Matthew 28:1-10 (CEB) -Reader:

Jesus was buried before sundown on Friday. Saturday was the Sabbath. As the sun rose on Sunday, two women go to Jesus’ tomb to finish His burial. But nothing was as they expected! Matthew 28:1-10,

28 The Sabbath day was now over. It was dawn on the first day of the week. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

2 There was a powerful earthquake. An angel of the Lord came down from heaven. The angel went to the tomb. He rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His body shone like lightning. His clothes were as white as snow. 4 The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

5 The angel said to the women, “Don’t be afraid. I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. **6** He is not here! He has risen, just as He said He would! Come and see the place where He was lying. **7** Go quickly! Tell His disciples, ‘He has risen from the dead. He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see Him.’ Now I have told you.”

8 So the women hurried away from the tomb. They were afraid, but they were filled with joy. They ran to tell the disciples. **9** Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings!” He said. They came to Him, took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. **10** Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee. There they will see me.”

LOVE.GROW.SERVE. MOMENT: Easter Offering: UMCOR

GENERATIONAL BRIDGE: -Pastor Andrew

MESSAGE: Empty Cross

PP#1: Empty Tomb

“While they were discussing these things, Jesus Himself arrived and joined them on their journey.” -Luke 24:15

Empty Tomb. Luke 24:15, “While they were discussing these things, Jesus Himself arrived and joined them on their journey.”

Easter begins just like every other day.

Let that sink in. Don’t miss this very important truth: *Easter begins like every other day.*

What are our every days like? Each day begins with a “to do” list. I think of the women: up early to take care of unfinished business. Each day has responsibilities, errands, chores, obligations, relationships to nurture, showing up for work or appointments, the same baggage as yesterday, pressing forward trying to move the mountain.

PP#2: *Image identifying a “normal day” full of isolation, political unrest, racism, violence, etc.*

Looking back over this past year, our *every days* have been ones of isolation, of distancing, of pandemic, of masking our faces, of limiting our contact, of working from home, of many, many days home alone. Every days look lonesome, left with our swirling thoughts and emotions, of changed plans, of cancelled trips, of not seeing family, of being alone at the hospital, of not having things work out like we wanted. We spend a lot more time doing nothing, passing the time, seeking escape by entertainment. We let our routines slide, eating is not as healthy, exercise, devotions, healthy, holy habits have eroded.

The political roller coaster and the behaviors of prominent leaders have made us question our confidence in government, leaders, in the direction of our country. News coverage has called us to question the stories covered by media, in even knowing what’s really going on, let alone understanding it!

The ugliness of racial discrimination and bias, in aggressions and violence, in a bewildering number of directions, wounds our hearts deeply. How can we have so far to go for racial harmony and value? We self reflect on how we embody racism without even knowing it!

What can we do to make a difference? How can it be that some people have to experience so much? And even the protests, important as they are, contain painful components of violence and the outpouring of anger in sometimes destructive ways.

PP#3: *Image for a person being pressed down by the weight of all the troubles of the world.*

Violence erupts in our every days! The daily murder count is astronomical. Shootings and stabbings and burnings and rape and abuse and violence seems to rage uncurbed. Deeply embedded sexism and bigotry scream to our faces just how sinful and out of control we are. Poverty struggles, environmental concerns, international warmongering on the broad level blanket our individual struggles with our finances, jobs, strained relationships, support systems falling apart, family needs, health concerns...and then...the washing machine breaks down!

We struggle with a growing negative outlook in our every days. We worry a lot more. We have increased anxiety. We struggle with despondency, being overwhelmed, have a lack of energy, and depression. So much hate. So much failure. So much defeat. So much stress. It's hard to even push through our every days!

PP#4: *Image of the disciples all dejected and despairing before Jesus' resurrection on Easter.*

So, be sure to hear that Easter begins just like every other day!

That first Easter, Jesus' followers woke up to a world against them. Their leader had been unfairly and unjustly "taken out." He was brutally killed for trying to do good. His followers were being hunted, sought out to be shut up. The Jewish and Roman governments wanted them disbanded. Their day started in death, defeat, isolation, hatred.

You heard from Matthew 28 how two Mary's left early in the morning to go to Jesus' tomb. They left under the cover of darkness. None of the men went with them. No support. The men were resigned to hopeless defeat. Why bother even getting up?

On the way to the tomb, the women no doubt discussed what they were up against. Jesus was dead. The tomb sealed. Guards placed in front. All they could do is complete the burial. But they needed to get into the tomb. Perhaps they could ask the guards to roll the stone. But that was unlikely, right? In reality, it was not going to end well. But all they could do was try. They had to do something to keep busy. This is how their day began. Does this resonate? Can you identify?

PP#5: The Easter Angel's Message (Matthew 28:5-7)

1. Don't be afraid!
2. Jesus is not here!
3. Jesus is alive, just like He promised!
4. Come see where He was laid.
5. Go and tell His disciples!

But at the tomb, things are different. The guards are lying on the ground in shock. The stone has been rolled away, and a glowing figure tells them: 1. Don't be afraid! 2. The crucified Jesus is not dead, but alive! 3. He has risen, just like He had promised. 4. See where His body was laid. And 4. Go and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead. They were see Him back in Galilee.

And then, verse eight describes their Easter condition. It says, “So the women hurried away from the tomb. They were afraid, but they were filled with joy.”

This, I think, is a great description of our Easter today, too, right? I mean, we carry the burden of the heaviness of our daily lives. We are afraid. But we have also heard the good news that Jesus is not dead, but alive! So we, who are burdened by our fears, are also filled with joy.

This is the same mixture that the men were soon to experience. John tells us that after hearing Mary’s report, Peter and John go check out the tomb. They leave the same way as the women: confused, fearful, and hopeful.

Well, in the Upper Room, they discuss it for awhile, wondering and wanting it to be true. Two of the men then announce that they need to head back to Emmaus. Perhaps they had to work in the morning. And as they travel along the road, they walk with mixed hearts.

PP#6: Luke 24:13-35 (Easter on the Road to Emmaus)

13 On that same day, two disciples were traveling to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 They were talking to each other about everything that had happened. 15 While they were discussing these things, Jesus Himself arrived and joined them on their journey. 16 They were prevented from recognizing Him.

Let’s go to that Easter story, in Luke 24. We call it Easter on the Road to Emmaus. Luke 24, starting in verse 13, “On that same day, two disciples were traveling to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 They were talking to each other about everything that had happened.” There. Just like our Easter. The day starts in the heaviness of defeat, but they’ve hear the report that Jesus was alive. Mixed feelings as they walk. Verse 15, “While they were discussing these things, Jesus Himself arrived and joined them on their journey. 16 They were prevented from recognizing Him.” So, while walking this Easter road, Jesus joins them. Hang on to that: we’ll come back to that one, that’s a keeper!

PP#7: Luke 24:13-35 (Easter on the Road to Emmaus)

17 Jesus said to them, “What are you talking about as you walk along?” They stopped, their faces downcast.

18 The one named Cleopas replied, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who is unaware of the things that have taken place there over the last few days?”

19 He said to them, “What things?” ...

But Jesus asks why they are so downcast. Verse 17, “Jesus said to them, ‘What are you talking about as you walk along?’ They stopped, their faces downcast.” Easter starts like every other day: with downcast faces. Verse 18, “The one named Cleopas replied, ‘Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who is unaware of the things that have taken place there over the last few days?’

19 He said [innocently!] to them, ‘What things?’”

PP#8: Luke 24:13-35 (Easter on the Road to Emmaus)

19 ... They said to Him, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth. Because of His powerful deeds and words, He was recognized by God and all the people as a prophet. 20 But our chief priests and our leaders handed Him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified Him. 21 We had hoped he was the one who would redeem Israel. All these

things happened three days ago. 22 But there's more: Some women from our group have left us stunned. They went to the tomb early this morning 23 and didn't find His body. They came to us saying that they had even seen a vision of angels who told them He is alive. 24 Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women said. They didn't see Him."

"They said to Him, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth. Because of His powerful deeds and words, He was recognized by God and all the people as a prophet. 20 But our chief priests and our leaders handed Him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified Him. 21 We had hoped He was the one who would redeem Israel. All these things happened three days ago. 22 But there's more: Some women from our group have left us stunned. They went to the tomb early this morning 23 and didn't find His body. They came to us saying that they had even seen a vision of angels who told them He is alive. 24 Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women said. They didn't see Him.'"

PP#9: Empty Tomb

1. Path - Jesus joins them [us!]

Easter is about a miracle. The final declaration on Friday was that Jesus was dead. He was buried. His tomb was full. Violence and defeat had won. But Easter morning, the earth shook! Power came down from on high! The tomb was opened! And Jesus came out. Jesus is alive! This is Easter: the full tomb is now empty! The angels tell the women to come in and look, to make sure. Yes, indeed: empty!

But they leave with mixed feelings. They continue on their day, still filled with what worries them and wears them down. And as they go—1. the women heading off to tell the disciples, 2. the two disciples heading back to Emmaus, and 3. later that night the rest of the disciples in the Upper Room—to each group Jesus appears right where they were at! *Easter happens on their daily path!*

Jesus is alive, yes, a miracle! But Easter is that the risen Jesus comes into their normal lives! Easter starts out like every other day, but the risen Jesus joins them, comes to them—and us!—where they were, where we are! That's the miracle of Easter! And that's the miracle of Easter today, for us! When we proclaim that Christ is risen, we profess that He is alive and comes to us *on our path*. That's Easter!

PP#10: Luke 24:13-35 (Easter on the Road to Emmaus)

25 Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! Your dull minds keep you from believing all that the prophets talked about. 26 Wasn't it necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and then enter into His glory?" 27 Then He interpreted for them the things written about Himself in all the scriptures, starting with Moses and going through all the Prophets.

Jesus restores His life-giving and life-restoring relationship with them. They each have a personal encounter that changes them from the inside out. The women bow down and grasp His feet. The blinded men feel their hearts burn within them. Luke 24, picking it up at verse 25, "25 Then Jesus said to them, 'You foolish people! Your dull minds [their eyes are blinded just like their minds] keep you from believing all that the prophets talked about. 26 Wasn't it necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and then enter into His glory?' 27 Then He

interpreted for them the things written about Himself in all the scriptures, starting with Moses and going through all the Prophets.”

PP#11: Luke 24:13-35 (Easter on the Road to Emmaus)

28 When they came to Emmaus, He acted as if He was going on ahead. 29 But they urged Him, saying, “Stay with us. It’s nearly evening, and the day is almost over.” So He went in to stay with them. 30 After He took His seat at the table with them, He took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Their eyes were opened and they recognized Him, but He disappeared from their sight. 32 They said to each other, “Weren’t our hearts on fire when He spoke to us along the road and when He explained the scriptures for us?”

Verse 28, “When they came to Emmaus, Jesus acted as if He was going on ahead. 29 But they urged Him, saying, ‘Stay with us. It’s nearly evening, and the day is almost over.’ So He went in to stay with them. 30 After He took His seat at the table with them, He took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Their eyes were opened and they recognized Him, but He disappeared from their sight. 32 They said to each other, ‘Weren’t our hearts on fire when He spoke to us along the road and when He explained the scriptures for us?’”

PP#12: Empty Tomb

1. Path - Jesus joins them [us!]
2. Passion - Jesus changes them [us!] from the inside out

The risen Jesus meets us on our everyday PATH of life, and He reignites a PASSION within us. The disciples remark, “Didn’t our hearts burn within us when He taught us?” The words of life from the living Word of Life kindle a burning heart within. Meeting the living Jesus changes them. Their outlook changes. Before their faces were downcast, trudging through their day. Experiencing Jesus lifts their faces with life and hope and joy. The women begin to run, their feet trying to keep up with their racing minds and flying hearts. And it is when Jesus breaks bread with the men that their eyes finally catch up with their hearts. Death is changed into life. Despair is changed into hope. Weariness is changed into energy. They are changed from the inside out, and their course through their typical day is not completely changed. That’s Easter!

PP#13: Luke 24:13-35 (Easter on the Road to Emmaus)

33 They got up right then and returned to Jerusalem. They found the eleven and their companions gathered together. 34 They were saying to each other, “The Lord really has risen! He appeared to Simon!” 35 Then the two disciples described what had happened along the road and how Jesus was made known to them as He broke the bread.

Verse 33, see how everything’s changed! “They got up right then and returned to Jerusalem. [What took them hours to walk they now fly back running.] They found the eleven and their companions gathered together. 34 They were saying to each other, “The Lord really has risen! He appeared to Simon!” [They find out that Jesus had gone from them and had appeared to Peter.] 35 Then the two disciples described what had happened along the road and how Jesus was made known to them as He broke the bread.” And then, the story continues, with Jesus appearing to the disciple that evening in the locked Upper Room.

PP#14: Empty Tomb

1. Path - Jesus joins them [us!]
2. Passion - Jesus changes them [us!] from the inside out
3. Purpose - Jesus sends them on a mission

The changed disciples rush back to the others to share their testimony, to share the burning in their hearts and to set other hearts aflame. PATH, PASSION, and now PURPOSE. Jesus sends them on a mission! Jesus sends the women to go tell the others that He will go meet them up in Galilee, and off the women run! Hurry back to where you came from, for now everything's different.

Easter begins like every other day, full of pain and sadness and defeat. But, the tomb is now empty! And that changes everything. The risen Jesus appears to you right on the weary path you travel. And He changes you. He ignites a fire within you and changes your outlook. Death becomes life! Easter starts like every other day, but Jesus changes how it ends! You go back to your daily lives, but now it's different. Now you spring with hope, with victory, with life. You proclaim that you now have a different future.

If you wonder if there is any end to our isolation, our loneliness, our division, our lack of justice, our inequality, our hatred, our toxic bigotry, racism, violence, earth destruction, glass ceilings, closed doors; chronic diagnoses, financial suffocation, broken relationships, strained marriages, lost opportunities, unfulfilled dreams, stifling routines, choking limitations, chronic addictions, sin that never abates, death that seems so final; if you begin to despair and your countenance falls and your steps slow to plodding and trudging; then I proclaim to you: the tomb is empty! The risen Jesus comes to you right on your path, ignites your passion by changing you from the inside out, and gives you purpose by send you on a mission. There is hope for our world because the tomb is empty!

We have been traveling with Jesus the journey of Lent, emptying ourselves. And so, now, we can be filled when Jesus shows up to us. Our hearts can burn with His holy fire. Our lives can be changed because they belong to Him. Our lives are empty. The tomb is empty. And at last, we can finally be filled!

PP#15: *Image that combines Holy Communion and a plastic Easter egg.*

You have been dutifully holding on to your plastic Easter eggs so patiently. It's time to open them up! Let's see what's on the inside. Go ahead and break them open. What's inside? A piece of bread! Yes!

That first Easter, Jesus came to the two men traveling on their life's path, but they were too blind and too closed-minded to see recognize Him. Yet, their hearts were burning within them. And it wasn't until Jesus sat down with them to eat and broke the bread with them, that they recognized Him. It was in the breaking of the bread that they recognized Him.

HOLY COMMUNION:**-Prayer of Confession**

Today, I believe that the Holy Spirit has been giving you a burning within your hearts. And, for the culmination of our Easter worship, we are going to break bread with Jesus! So, take your bread, and hold it. Soon we will all eat together. But first, we confess the ways that we are

blinded and close minded. Spend a few moments listening to Jesus. He is instructing your hearts. Listen to how His Spirit tells you that you've been blinded to Him in your daily lives, how you have been closed minded to His leading along your path. Ask Him to set you right, to reveal Himself to you, to let you experience Him more fully. Spend a few moments in personal prayer.

HOLY COMMUNION:

- Words of Assurance
- Great Thanksgiving
- Word of Institution
- Prayer of the Holy Spirit
- Breaking of the Bread
- Eating the Bread together
- Opening the Cup
- Drinking the Cup together
- Prayer of Blessing

[IN-PERSON WORSHIP ONLY] CLOSING SONG: *Living Hope* -Sanctify

OFFERING: -Pastor David

- Easter offering: UMCOR!
- Give of your monies to God's work through this church. You can give in person, mail it in or, most conveniently, you can make an automated transfer or a debit card payment on the church website or by using the "square" on the bulletin.

ANNOUNCEMENTS -Pastor David

Next Sunday: Begin our spring message series: Strange Fire! "God is an all consuming fire." Next week's message, we see Jesus light a strange fire on the shore.

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

"While they were discussing these things, Jesus Himself arrived and joined them on their journey." -Luke 24:15

BENEDICTION -Pastor David