

The Same, yet New!

King of Glory Lutheran Church

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Easter Weekend April 4-5, 2026

John 20:1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." ³ Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴ The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ and the cloth that had been on Jesus's head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed, ⁹ for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb, ¹² and she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." ¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, "Do not touch me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' " ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and she told them that he had said these things to her.

We are never the same through Jesus' resurrection, and we are called to be God's new creation with the sharing of His love.

Do we have any people that like to color Easter eggs out there? Really? That's eggstraordinary! I'm shell shocked. That's no yolk!

When I was growing up, my family loved to decorate Easter eggs. Out would come the crayons and the food coloring drops. The kitchen always smelled of vinegar. My sister loved pastel colored eggs. I loved to make them incredibly bright. And my brother, well, he would dump one egg in every color so that eventually it would just turn this ugly gross greenish black. Those eggs were still eggs, but they were new.

Things were new that first day of the week. No one but God the Creator, God the Redeemer and God the Sustainer knew what really happened inside the tomb when Jesus was resurrected. There is a beautiful Easter chant which says the 'night – only the night – knew the time and the hour which Christ rose again from hell.'

But Mary Magdalene, Peter and the beloved disciple John were the first humans to know something had changed. Mary was shocked to find the wheel like stone, rolled past the opening of the new tomb. She collapses in grief. Peter, being impetuous Peter, runs right inside to see all the linens lying in their spots, but empty, like a balloon with the air gone out of it. Clearly, no one had unwrapped Jesus' body. Why would they take the time to lay the cloths out in a pattern? John, he finally goes inside also, and believes.

The disciples go home and Mary is left with her grief and confusion about where her Lord's body could be. Jesus, standing near, asks her, "Whom are you looking for?" Mary sees, but doesn't see and thinks Jesus is the gardener.

Her thought is correct at one level. There was another garden way back in the beginning of the beginning. God, made a garden and God's first humans heard the sound of God walking in the garden. God begins to talk to Adam and Eve after their eyes were opened.

Mary Magdalene is right, Jesus is God gardener and creator of all. Creator of all things new. She of all people would know this. Jesus banished seven demons from her spirit.

But in this moment she can't see Him yet. Why would she ever expect that Jesus would actually be alive? She can't see her Lord through her tears, her grief, her

misunderstanding. It is only when Jesus calls her by name...”Mary”...are her eyes opened.

The Lord quickly reminds her that He is not like He once was. “Don’t touch me.” He’s the same, but changed. Now, Jesus has a resurrected body; one that can eat and drink but one that can appear and disappear at will. He’s trying to tell Mary, that He won’t be with her forever. Jesus will leave her again when He ascends.

That’s the glory of the first Easter and this Easter, brothers and sisters! Jesus is still fully God, but He has passed through death and is alive again in a new resurrected body. He is the same loving God; but has defeated sin and death. Death will never again have the last Word. Jesus is the last Word. Christ is Risen! **He is Risen Indeed!**

Let me tell you a story. I’ve changed the name and situation, but this is a true story. An adolescent teenager named Sammy was fighting cancer. He was really struggling physically and mentally. He was flunking most of his classes. He had no interest in his old hobbies or friends even when he did have energy to enjoy them. His parents were extremely worried. As his pastor, I couldn’t say anything that he would respond to. It got so bad that Sammy needed others to help him find life again. The family enlisted an excellent counselor.

Sammy didn’t like that at all. At first he refused to talk. But when he realized he wasn’t going to be judged – that this person only wanted to help him find the way back to himself, then it got easier. The counselor discovered Sammy had an artistic bent – a real talent. Through art Sammy found his way home to himself even with cancer. He would be the same, but new. He put on an art show for his family and the doctors at the conclusion of his radiation treatments. One day, Sammy asked me what were some of my favorite things. “Why God and birds!” I said. “Flowers and the sunrise and music!” A week or so later, he presented me with this thank you gift. (Slide of tennis shoes) Sammy was back. A little new resurrection!

God alone knows what we brought with us into worship today. Perhaps we are carrying grief over people or relationships or our health that feel like they will never be healed. There is disappointment and distress for places of conflict in our world. Frustration with the lack of commitment for communication through discord. Maybe it’s simply rising prices.

Easter people, notice this! There is nothing God doesn’t create anew.

Even the beach changes with sand redistribution every night due to tidal shifts and winds.

The Artemis II astronauts have passed through Earth's orbit. They will return transformed by seeing for themselves the earth and moon from outer space.

When Braylon Mullins pulled off a miracle and let fly a 35-foot nylon three-pointer for UConn's victory March 31, it was March Madness, but no April Fools! He will forever be the same young adult, but never the same basketball player.

If there is any place in your life, in our collective life, in our world's life, where we feel despondent nothing will ever change, despair no more!

Easter people say this!

There is no person!

There is no place or situation!

God cannot reach.

God knows darkness and despair.

Yet, God creates anew with light and love and Jesus' open tomb!

It might take longer than we like. It might not be the outcome we wanted. But if God can conquer sin and death, God can do anything in our lives! Christ is Risen! **He is Risen, indeed!** I think you believe it just as much as I do, because I hear you say, Christ is Risen! **He is Risen, indeed!** Really? Say it again so the people watching live can hear... Christ is Risen! **He is Risen indeed!**

Now, Jesus gave Mary Magdalene a command: Go and tell you've seen the Lord. Now we are the sent ones with this incredible, life-changing, Good News!

We know how God has changed us – how God has transformed our lives, and we will never be the same. We want others to know that same Resurrection power. Let's go and tell! Let's show and tell! Say it to each other and say it to the world! Christ is Risen! **He is Risen, indeed! Amen**