

SA, SL, TS, and DSM United Churches

Easter Sunday – April 20th, 2025

Prelude: – Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

He is Risen! Hallelujah!

Today is Easter Sunday. Today we celebrate Jesus is alive! All of the Holy Week's Services are on our websites at southbuxton.ca, and talbotstreet.ca

Thank you to Christie Coatsworth for our music this morning. Thank you to Tracey Major for putting together the Power Point slides.

Call to Worship:

Eric: Christ is risen!

People: He is risen indeed!

Eric: Christ is risen!

People: He is risen indeed!

Eric: Christ is risen!

People: He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

Lighting of the Christ Candle:

Eric: The risen Christ lives today!

People: We are witnesses to these things.

Eric: We sing praise to God incarnate.

People: May Christ's love burn within us!

Opening Hymn: VU 155 "Jesus Christ is Risen Today"

Jesus Christ is risen today, hallelujah!
our triumphant holy day, hallelujah!
who did once, upon the cross, hallelujah!
suffer to redeem our loss. Hallelujah!

Hymns of praise then let us sing hallelujah!
unto Christ, our heavenly King, hallelujah!
who endured the cross and grave, hallelujah!
sinners to redeem and save. Hallelujah!

But the pains which he endured, hallelujah!
our salvation have procured; hallelujah!
now above the sky he's King, hallelujah!
where the angels ever sing. Hallelujah!

Sing we to our God above, hallelujah!
praise eternal as God's love; hallelujah!
praise our God, ye heavenly host, hallelujah!
praise the Son and Holy Ghost. Hallelujah!

Opening Prayer:

Lord Jesus, today we come celebrating God, who looked beyond our faults and saw our needs. We come celebrating that victory is ours today. We come rejoicing that sin and evil did not get the last word. We praise you and we thank you for being a loving, patient God and for sending us Jesus Christ!

Thank you for giving sinners like us a second, third, and endless chances to right our wrongs and follow the Author of Grace. Thank you for giving the Good News of your Son's resurrection to the dutiful Mary Magdalene. You called her name, and she finally believed and proclaimed that she had seen the Risen Lord!

Like Mary, time and time again, you have called our name. You have gotten our attention, and we stopped wallowing in despair, sin, and self-reliance. We turned, and there you were! Assuring us that God delivered you from death and God will deliver us also from sin and death.

Today, we put Mary's proclamation in our hearts and on our lips. May our tears turn into laughter as we hold fast to the Easter knowledge that in Christ, all things are possible, if we will only believe. Amen.

Responsive Psalm: Psalm 118: 1 – 2, 14 – 24

Tell the Lord how thankful you are, because he is kind and always merciful.

Let Israel shout, "God is always merciful!"

My power and my strength come from the Lord, and he has saved me.

From the tents of God's people come shouts of victory: "The Lord is powerful!

With his mighty arm the Lord wins victories! The Lord is powerful!"

And so my life is safe, and I will live to tell what the Lord has done.

He punished me terribly, but he did not let death lay its hands on me.

Open the gates of justice! I will enter and tell the Lord how thankful I am.

Here is the gate of the Lord! Everyone who does right may enter this gate.

I praise the Lord for answering my prayers and saving me.

The stone that the builders tossed aside has now become the most important stone.

The Lord has done this, and it is amazing to us.

This day belongs to the Lord! Let's celebrate and be glad today.

Children's Story:

The Psalmist reminds us, "The steadfast love of the Lord endures forever". Emphasis on the "steadfast love of the Lord" is the way to go today. In this psalm, we have the songs of victory; we have the promise of eternity; we have the promise of joy and the hope of a clear blue morning. We have a sense that everything is going to be all right.

But not in the denying the reality of the world – this is not groundless optimism. This offers hope - a wild hope that opens the door to the possibility that the only thing that makes sense anymore is the kingdom approach to living in God's world. The only thing upon which we can build a life is loving God and loving neighbor – which includes those we are supposed to call enemies. The only thing that will give a sense of wholeness is to live generously, freed from the call to gather together so much stuff that it becomes a weight pulling us down. We are freed to see the light of a clear blue morning.

“The steadfast love of the Lord endures forever”. What better proclamation can we make on Easter Sunday?

Children's Hymn: B 299 "He Lives"

I serve a risen Saviour, He's in the world today;
I know that He is living, whatever men may say;
I see His hand of mercy, I hear his voice of cheer,
And just the time I need Him, He's always near.

Refrain: He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me and talks with me
along life's narrow way,
He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!
You ask me how I know He lives?
He lives within my heart.

In all the world around me, I see His loving care,
And though my heart grows weary I never will despair;
I know that He is leading through all the stormy blast,
The Day of His appearing will come at last. *Refrain:*

Rejoice, rejoice, O Christian, lift up your voice and sing,
Eternal hallelujahs to Jesus Christ the King!
The hope of all who seek Him, the help of all who find,
None other is so loving, so good and kind. *Refrain:*

Gospel Scripture: John 20: 1 - 18

On Sunday morning while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. She ran to Simon Peter and to Jesus' favorite disciple and said, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb! We don't know where they have put him." Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. They ran side by side, until the other disciple ran faster than Peter and got there first. He bent over and saw the strips of linen cloth lying inside the tomb, but he did not go in. When Simon Peter got there, he went into the tomb and saw the strips of cloth. He also saw the piece of cloth that had been

used to cover Jesus' face. It was rolled up and in a place by itself. The disciple who got there first then went into the tomb, and when he saw it, he believed. At that time Peter and the other disciple did not know that the Scriptures said Jesus would rise to life. So the two of them went back to the other disciples.

Mary Magdalene stood crying outside the tomb. She was still weeping, when she stooped down and saw two angels inside. They were dressed in white and were sitting where Jesus' body had been. One was at the head and the other was at the foot. The angels asked Mary, "Why are you crying?" She answered, "They have taken away my Lord's body! I don't know where they have put him." As soon as Mary said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there. But she did not know who he was. Jesus asked her, "Why are you crying? Who are you looking for?" She thought he was the gardener and said, "Sir, if you have taken his body away, please tell me, so I can go and get him." Then Jesus said to her, "Mary!"

She turned and said to him, "Rabboni." The Aramaic word "Rabboni" means "Teacher." Jesus told her, "Don't hold on to me! I have not yet gone to the Father. But tell my disciples I am going to the one who is my Father and my God, as well as your Father and your God." Mary Magdalene then went and told the disciples she had seen the Lord. She also told them what he had said to her.

Reflection: "A Day of Singing"

If there is a day for singing, it is this day. Today's sermon should sound like an anthem. This is not a day for explaining; it is a day for describing. May my words paint pictures in your hearts today. This is the most important story ever told.

This morning we hear John's story of a frightened Mary of Magdala who found a tomb empty and a simple explanation that she came up with on her own. That led to a foot race that ended in confusion and a lonely, tear-filled vigil in the garden, interrupted by two interlopers who asked about her tears, but gave no explanation. Then Mary turned around and bumped into a gardener, so Mary thought. The gardener was actually the Risen Savior Jesus, who of course knew Mary by name. In calling "Mary", Mary knew who the gardener really was. She would recognize his voice anywhere!

Mary runs back to town to tell the disciples. Imagine hearing Mary's story and like Peter and John, running to see what Mary is talking about. Imagine Mary running behind them still weeping. What does it mean when Jesus said "Don't hold on to me"? What did Jesus mean? Maybe you had to be there. Or maybe we will find out when we meet Jesus ourselves. Because right now, I don't really know what Jesus meant.

Have we ever felt the sense of abandonment? Have we ever felt times that things are out of our control? I sure you have because I have! I have felt that abandonment when someone I love is no longer available to me. Maybe it is death like Mary,

when Jesus was gone. On Good Friday we felt that everything is once again out of our control. Yet this morning as we waited in the darkness for the sun to come up, we wondered how could this happen? Is this story really true? *But when I think that God, his son no sparing, sent him to die, I Scarce can take it in, That on that cross, my burden gladly bearing, he bled and died to take away my sin; Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to thee. How great thou art. How great thou art. Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to thee. How great thou art. How great thou art.*

It is music and singing, that can help to know the truth. It is in our experiences that help us to know. It is because of what we feel and what we've felt that our faith grows out of those experiences – of us living in the real world just as everyone else. In listening to the experiences of the first Easter stories and of others sharing, we hear the truth that lives among us. The Spirit that gathers us as one, on this special Easter morning.

Today is about the joy of possibility - in the face of a grim certainty. We are convinced that death has the final word. But Easter says differently. It is the Easter story, in reflection that we realize this is God's way, which we have known from the beginning. It reminds us, "That our ways are not God's way". Thank be to God.

"The steadfast love of the Lord endures forever". What better proclamation can we make on Easter Sunday? Another way we can say it is simply, "Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed." We are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Reflection Hymn: VU 238 "O Lord My God"

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
consider all the works thy hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
thy power throughout the universe displayed.

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee,
How great thou art! How great thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee,
How great thou art! How great thou art!*

When through the woods and forest glades I wander,
I hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
and hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze. R

But when I think that God, his Son not sparing,

sent him to die, I scarce can take it in,
that on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
he bled and died to take away my sin. R

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!
Then I shall bow in humble adoration
and there proclaim, 'My God, how great thou art!' R

The Prayer of Great Thanksgiving:

Eric: Christ is risen!

People: He is risen indeed!

Eric: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them up to the Lord.

Eric: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Eric: Holy Mystery that is Wholly Love, you are beyond complete knowledge, above perfect description.

People: Creator, Redeemer, and Holy Spirit; Source of Life, Living Word, and Bond of Love, you are creative and self-giving, generously moving in all the near and distant corners of the universe.

Eric: Nothing exists that does not find its source in you.

People: Through fear-filled days and aching nights when the powers of death have done their worst, your love has never deserted us.

Eric: Even when we turn away from you, you are with us; your presence never fails us, your gifts of hope and new life transforms us.

People: We praise you for Jesus Christ, risen to life, eternal as your love.

Eric: With the women at the tomb, we raise the strain of gladness.

People: Hallelujah! Life is stronger than death! The day of resurrection has come, scattering fear and gloom.

Eric: And so we rejoice with all your people of every time and place, and with angels and archangels, to proclaim the glory of your name:

Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God of Hosts!
Heaven and earth are full of your glory!
Heaven and earth praise you,
O God most high!

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: The sharing of gifts is one way we can celebrate resurrection. Let us give in love!

Offertory: VU 541 "Praise God From Whom..."

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above ye heavenly host;

Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Offertory Prayer:

Radiant God, whose love endures forever, we gather today in the light of resurrection hope, offering these gifts as a response to the abundant grace we have received. In this period of spiritual renewal, may our giving reflect the joy of the empty tomb and the promise of life everlasting. Transform our offerings into acts of love that bring light to the world, just as Christ's light dawned in our hearts. We dedicate these gifts to your service, trusting that, in your hands, they will bring forth new life. In the Name of the Risen Christ, we pray. Amen.

Hymn: VU 400 "Listen To Your Children Praying"

Lord, listen to your children praying,
Lord, send your Spirit in this place;
Lord, listen to your children praying,
send us love, send us power, send us grace!

Pastoral Prayer & Lord's Prayer:

Remembering Jesus at the Table:

Eric: It is Jesus, God incarnate, the Risen Christ, who joins us together as a community of broken, but hopeful believers:

People: loving what he loved, living what he taught, and striving to be his faithful servants in our time and place.

Eric: In this meal, we remember Jesus, his promises, and the price he paid for who he was, what he said, and what he done.

People: On the night before Jesus died, he took a loaf of bread, gave thanks, broke it, and said,

Eric: "Take and eat, whenever you do this, remember me."

People: After supper, Jesus took the cup and poured, saying,

Eric: "This is the new covenant; remember me."

People: We do remember. We remember his life of love, his friendship, his teaching, his dying, and his rising to life again.

Eric: In sharing this meal, we live out the mystery of our faith:

People: Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Prayer for Transformation:

People: Holy Mystery, God the Spirit, we call on you to transform these familiar things, as you continually transform the world around us.

Eric: Bless this bread (*hold up the bread*) and this cup (*Hold up the cup*), the wheat and the grape, the farmer and the harvest, the seed and the sower.

People: So that in the sharing of these simple elements in community, we may taste and see your goodness.

Eric: The gifts of God for the people of God.

People: Thanks be to God!

As we partake the bread together:

Eric: The body of Christ,

People: the bread of life.

As we partake the drink together:

Eric: The lifeblood of Christ,

People: the cup of blessing.

Prayer After Communion:

Thank you, O Christ, for this feast of life. We are fed by your love; we are strengthened by your life. We are sent forth into this world to live your way and share your joy. We are now commissioned to feed as we have been fed, forgive as we have been forgiven, love as we have been loved. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Closing Hymn: VU 586 “We Shall Go Out...”

- 1 We shall go out with hope of resurrection;
we shall go out, from strength to strength go on;
we shall go out and tell our stories boldly;
tales of a love that will not let us go.
We'll sing our songs of wrongs that can be righted;
we'll dream our dreams of hurts that can be healed;
we'll weave a cloth of all the world united
within the vision of new life in Christ.
- 2 We'll give a voice to those who have not spoken;
we'll find the words for those whose lips are sealed;
we'll make the tunes for those who sing no longer,
expressive love alive in every heart.
We'll share our joy with those who still are weeping,
raise hymns of strength for hearts that break in grief,
we'll leap and dance the resurrection story,
including all in circles of our love.

Blessing:

Eric: May God's abiding love and hope give us new life. May God's unmerited grace and mercy keep us hope-filled. And may God's restorative justice bring to us all, perfect peace. For Steadfast Love is risen!

People: Steadfast Love is risen indeed! Hallelujah! now and forever more.

Postlude: – Christie Coatsworth