

## **“He is Risen”**

Rev. Erika Martinez-Flores  
Mark 16.1-8  
March 31, 2024. Easter Sunday  
Westby UMC & Viroqua UMC

On this Easter day the liturgical greeting: “Hallelujah! “Christ is risen,” is more than a momentary expression of an event from the past. This statement constitutes the most important spiritual declaration of the entire Christian faith and its depth is such that upon receiving the greeting we respond in an affirmative and confessional way: “It is true! The Lord is risen, Hallelujah!” These words represent for the believer the conviction that Jesus, the Risen One, lives eternally.

The expressions of the gospels: “After the Sabbath” (Mark 16:1) or “The first day of the week” (John 20:1), narrate how the third day is the moment of the resurrection and the encounter with the tomb. empty. There the angel messengers of the resurrected one bear witness that the events that Mary Magdalene, the other women, Peter and the other disciples experience are true.

The resurrection, from the story of the gospels, narrates particulars that describe God's intervention that fulfills his promises: "I will not die, but I will live and tell of the deeds of the Lord." (Psalm 118:17). But to receive the life of the resurrected one requires faith and acceptance that God has a different logic from that of the world. If the angels were needed at the place of the resurrection to give instructions to the women and the disciples, it means that the resurrection is difficult to understand and explain. It may be because we live in a world accustomed to sin and death, or because our faith is still very shaky like that of Peter who, despite saying that he would give his life for Jesus, was able to deny it at the time of trial, or because we seek to Jesus among the dead and we ignore that the resurrected Jesus is close to us.

Even with all our shortcomings and doubts, the stone removed from the tomb, the bandages, the absence of Jesus and the empty tomb confirm that God acted and that Jesus lives eternally. Immanuel, God with us, who promised that he would be with us always confirms his predictions, and in his new, abundant life, all prophecies find

fulfillment. Jesus is alive, he has risen, this is the always current message at the center of Christian life. Today we and all of us who celebrate this mystery declare with Mary Magdalene, in the first person: I have seen the Lord.

The resurrection of Jesus is more than a personal event between Jesus and the Father. Jesus shares his resurrection with us, shows us that we too will have the opportunity to live with him eternally and that we begin that communion here in life before we die.

At Easter we pass with Jesus from death, sin, the grave and despair to the garden of the tomb where Jesus has experienced the new, transformed and abundant life that the Father gives him. Jesus leaves the tomb open and the stone rolled away, because he knows that it is also important and necessary for us to leave the tomb and live differently. Although we have become accustomed to the chains of sin and live in a culture of death, the resurrection of Jesus is real and is also for our lives.

That is why we celebrate Easter as a recognition and declaration that the life of Jesus and with Jesus is eternal. That is why we gather on the first day of the week around the Altar to remember and celebrate his presence around us. That is why we return to the Altar every Sunday to confirm, remember and celebrate that the tomb is empty, Jesus has risen and renews us in his love and forgiveness.

Jesus' question to Mary Magdalene "Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?" Confirm his concern and presence in all our pains and difficulties. Just as he did with her, Jesus also calls each of us by her name to make himself known. For this reason all human suffering due to the resurrection of Jesus is accepted and overcome. In the risen Jesus we find the Good Shepherd who calls us by name because he wants us to obey his voice and follow him.

By experiencing the resurrection of Jesus we have to bear witness and share with our actions that he lives with us because we have seen him. It is our responsibility as Christians to communicate to those who live in tombs, tombs, chained to their sins, additions or slaves to death, that God has acted and that Jesus lives with us forever.

The new life that Jesus receives is shared with us, therefore, at Easter we are renewed, transformed and receive the opportunity for a new life with him.

Death has been defeated and victory is for life. Our ancient enemy, death, which entered the world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve, has been defeated by the obedience of Jesus. Death has no control over Jesus and therefore over those of us who believe in him. His death and burial were not able to contain the abundant life of Jesus.

Today, jubilant and happy, we say: "The right hand of the Lord is exalted! The right hand of the Lord has triumphed!" (Psalm 118:16). Easter is the personal encounter with Jesus, the risen one; It is the recognition that our sinful nature is forgiven and enabled to receive and share the new life of the resurrected one. That is why we rejoice and proclaim: "It is true! The Lord is risen, Hallelujah!" Amen.