



# Camrose United Church

Easter Sunday April 04, 2021

Rev. Helen Reed, Diaconal Minister

---

## ***Where did we come from?***

On Good Friday, the body of Jesus was taken and laid in a borrowed tomb. A stone was rolled to cover the entrance.

Friends did what they could before the Sabbath began, planning to return at sunrise on the third day to carry perfumes and spices to honour him in the rituals as their own.

Before then, there were two long nights to endure. They returned to their houses to follow their rituals, to pray and reflect upon their role and wonder what they had done, what they should have done.

*♪ Hymn: ♫ VU#182 Stay with us through the night.*

## ***Back to the Garden Based on John 20:1–18***

Mary Magdalene got up while it was still dark. She could not sleep. Bad dreams would not let her mind or body rest.

She gathered some spices she had prepared, linen cloths, a bowl to hold water, and beads of myrrh in a wooden box. Myrrh smells sweet. It can cover the stink of death. It can also dull pain.

But Mary knew it could never take away the hurt she felt. And it could never cover the awful truth. Jesus was dead.

She would have gone sooner to wash his body and wrap it with spices. That was what family did for their loved ones, and Mary loved Jesus. But he died on the eve of the Sabbath, when no one could work. So she waited, along with the other women. Now the Sabbath was over.

Mary walked in silence to the tomb, where they had placed the body of Jesus after he was taken down from the

cross. The tomb was in a garden, a place filled with gnarled and ancient olive trees. As she walked, Mary wondered how she would shift the heavy stone that sealed the mouth of the tomb. But when she came closer, she saw that the stone had already been moved.

Who could have done this? Mary peered inside. Behind her, the morning sky was beginning to glow with colour. But all she could see was the darkness that had swallowed Jesus.

Empty darkness. There was no sign of the body. Only its linen wrappings lay on the ground. Where was Jesus?

Mary ran to speak to Simon Peter and the other disciple. They, too, came to the tomb but could not understand what had happened. They returned to their home.

Mary stayed behind. As she looked inside again, she saw two angels in the tomb.

"Why are you crying?" said a voice she did not know.

"They have taken my Lord," sobbed Mary.

"I don't know where they have put him."

Another voice, this one from outside the tomb, asked,

"Are you looking for someone?"

Mary turned around. She could barely see the speaker, dark against the sunrise. Her eyes were blurred with tears.

"Please," sobbed Mary. "If you have taken him away, give him back to me."

"Mary," he said. She knew his voice. No one said her name the way he did.

Jesus whispered.

"I am with you. Soon, I will come to you in a new way. Then I will always be part of you – and you of me."

Mary opened her eyes. Now she could see clearly. The garden looked different. Full of life and light.

Feeling like a new creature, Mary ran to tell the others the good news.

## **♪Hymn: ♫ VU#166 Joy Comes With The Dawn**

### **Coming to God in Prayer**

*This is a prayer of word and action. Words in italics offer us an action to enliven the words we share.*

**God of abundant hope and promise,  
you envision a world for us filled with beauty.**

**Blooming plants, a rainbow of foods to eat.**

**God, we *open our hands*, placing them before you  
and ask for what we need**

**to appreciate the beauty in the world.**

**God, we hold our hearts, *placing our hands to heart*,  
asking for what we need to appreciate  
the beauty in ourselves.**

**God, we *reach hands out to our neighbour*,  
asking for what we need to appreciate  
the beauty in one another.**

**God of radical hope, open our eyes, hearts and hands.**

**Amen.**

### **♪ Bells: Hallelujah**

### **Message:**

It makes our hearts skip, doesn't it? When we come to join together to celebrate Easter.

Even in this time of separateness, we are looking for Easter eggs, bunnies and chicks and we look for the signs of spring: pussy willows, green leaves, spring daffodils and tulips—all signs of new life emerging from the darkness of winter.

Some of us may remember when Easter church was filled with new and bright gloves, hats and dresses, new white shirts and maybe some new shoes too!

While for many these may seem a bit frivolous, these symbols of new life, these heralds of hope on the horizon are very Easter'ish.

It is good to remember that Easter was and is more than a day of excitement... it is another new beginning.

On that first Easter Morning, no-one really recognized it for what it really was.

On that first Easter Morning, there was confusion, there was puzzlement, there was tentative excitement in the face of death, of wishing for something different.

It wasn't in a building. In fact, it began in a cemetery a most unusual place, we might think, to find new beginnings.

It began with trepidation and worry. It began with a sense of duty. It began with questions "How could this happen? What does this mean?"

It began with friends trying to piece together something that they didn't understand.

Then God stepped in with the reminder that out of the most awful, trying of circumstance God can bring us out of the darkness into the light of new life. God stepped in and, as we have experienced before, while God often offers more questions than answers but also a seed of hope to move us forward in faith, with love..

Easter Sunday is a beginning of a new story that we will follow in the coming weeks as we explore with the disciples what great change, great love may mean in the changed and changing life ahead. Not everyone views or lives the story in the same way, but we begin again together with God.

Today, in the scripture we shared from the Gospel of John, Jesus came to Mary, not with answers but with the promise of more to come. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus revealed himself to the two Mary's who in turn told the disciples and Jesus invited them to meet him in Galilee. In Mark, three women were told by the angel to meet Jesus in Galilee. In

Luke, all the disciples joined in the ritual following the Sabbath and heard together the news of the risen Christ.

More confusion. More questions but, in all of these stories, different reflections on the same event, what is the same is God's promise of new life, of accompaniment that will change the future, that will draw followers into a new life that they don't know or understand and that God will be there.

I wonder if we might see ourselves in this story? We are followers of God and, we too, are in a life place where we don't understand how we got to where we are. We are in unfamiliar territory. Everything is upside down. All our familiar has been taken from us. We want to have what we had. We have lots of questions and not enough answers to satisfy our very human and confused souls.

In the Easter story, we are reminded that out of the challenges, God brings good things, God brings new life. Look, we, too, are coming together to practice our rituals in circumstances we would never have expected. While we might hope that God would step in to solve all of our worries, the Easter story tells us that what is more likely is that, if we are willing, God will set us on a new road, lit by the spirit, fuelled by the love of God and with Jesus our Teacher our continuing guide to answer our questions and ask us new ones.

What are our Easter signs of new life today? Is it the first or second vaccine that we are waiting for? Is it the now regular Zoom gatherings of family or friends to check in with that we never thought we could do before? Is the promise of gathering on the deck to share some time with family? Is it the angels we have met in our bewilderment who have assured us that it will be ok with such confidence that we can begin to believe it too?

Easter morning was a new beginning. It wasn't complete as of that moment, there was more to come. The amazing, holy combination of God, Jesus and Holy Spirit touched the world and invited all those who would follow into a new adventure, a new time of living and learning together.

On this Easter Sunday, when we hop, tweet, and blossom into spring together, when we celebrate the new life given to us, let us trust that God is accompanying us on a journey that is a great gift of goodness— even if we don't understand it right now.

Let us take a moment to appreciate the lightness of our days, the brightness of smiles shared with us, the sounds of voices that speak words of caring to us. Let us look at what we have and know that God is giving us an opportunity for new life again.

♪ *Goodness is Stronger than Evil (Desmond Tutu)*

### **Prayer for New Days:**

God of new days

All of our days are given to us by you,

**we will rejoice and be glad!**

Jesus asked for your compassion and love for us  
and every dawn reminds us

that you remove the shadow of death,

every dawn brings newness to the world,

every dawn brings opportunity and possibility to the world,  
every dawn brings new life.

**Give us faith and courage**

**to honour the teachings of Jesus**

help us be strong to defeat hate, hurt and sadness  
for the power of the risen Christ is the power of love  
and the power of love is the power of new life.

**Amen**

♪ *Choir: Christ is Alive.*

### ***Offering Invitation:***

The story of Easter speaks to us  
of giving all that we have so that others may live.  
It speaks of doing the best we can  
to honour what God gives us.  
These shared stories invite us  
to stand with those whose stories we have heard,  
to hear well, to learn well, to live well, to share well  
so that others may experience joy and hope with us.  
What As we share this story of faith, let us remember  
to honour our God with gifts and love for God's world.

### ***Minute4Mission***

***☞Hymn: ♫ VU176 Who is There on This Easter Morning.***

### ***Communion...***

*On this Easter day,  
When we remember that  
God can lift us out of despair  
into new life, into hope, into love  
we come together in spirit  
to share a meal with God, through Jesus  
with neighbours we know  
with neighbours we don't know.  
Linked together by our faith and God's spirit  
that cannot be held back by walls or doors.  
we share this meal hosted by our God  
who meets us where we are.*

### ***Call to Give Thanks***

**The Lord be with you And also with you.  
Lift up your hearts. We lift them up to the Lord.  
Let us give thanks to our God!  
It is good to give God thanks and praise.**

## ***Thanksgiving***

In this moment of giving thanks  
for your presence with us in all things,

we remember that your story  
did not begin with that first Easter morning,  
but began when you came  
to move over the waters of creation.

We remember the tragedies that  
came to your people  
and we know that you were not silent.

You gave your people a promise.  
You gave your people a rainbow.  
You gave your people a song.  
You gave your people peace.

At a table, in the garden, at the foot of the cross,  
at the empty tomb,  
serving you in the world, in all places, we pray to you:  
for the sick in body and mind, for those in sorrow,  
for the poor and lonely, for the oppressed and abused,  
for the health of creation, for the health of our own spirits  
and the courage and strength  
to love one another as Jesus loves us.

***Song of Creation: MV #203 (Tune: Kingsfold)***

**O Holy, Holy, Holy God, O God of time and space.  
All earth and sea and sky above  
bear witness to your grace.  
Hosanna in the highest heav'n,  
creation sings your praise.  
And blessed is the One who comes  
and bears your name always!**

***Remembering Jesus at Table:***

Gathered here with us now, Great Spirit,  
speak to us through  
our scattered table settings.

Fill these symbols with your peace  
so that we might find your peace within ourselves.

Jesus taught that bread was meant to be shared,  
and that all are welcome at God's table.

Jesus asked to be remembered in the sharing of the bread.

**In this sharing, in this welcoming,  
in this remembering, we celebrate the gift of life.**

Jesus taught that all of life is woven together  
and that love is why we're here.

Jesus asked to be remembered in the sharing of the cup.

**In this weaving together, in this loving,  
in this remembering, we celebrate the gift of life.**

***Prayer of Self-Giving***

Eternal God,

**As you invite us to this banquet of love,  
we remember that the church has a purpose:**

**To nurture faith and comfort hearts**

**To share gifts for the good of all**

**To resist forces that exploit and marginalize**

**To be fierce love in the face of violence**

**To defend all human dignity.**

**Loving the world as you do, as Jesus taught us,**

**may our actions**

**be the instrument of creation's mending**

**Amen.**

### ***Blessing:***

Holy God,  
we know that there are no walls that can keep you from us.  
As we gather our hearts,  
separated in body,  
but together in love,  
We ask that you pour your spirit  
upon the bread and cup that we each have before us.  
As we share this moment with you,  
may we taste the bread of life  
and know the cup of the new covenant  
blessed by your love.

**Amen.**

### ***Remembering God's promise and gift***

*MV 204 (Tune Kingsfold)*

**Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen,  
Christ will come again!  
Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen,  
Christ will come again!**

### ***The Prayer of Jesus***

Let us join our voices together in prayer, as we gather all people of the world to our hearts, as we sing together

**Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
Thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
lead us not into temptation,  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours.  
Now and forever. Amen.**

*(Steven R. Janco. Music © 2000, WLP)*

## ***Sharing the Bread and Wine***

Because of God's gifts we gather.  
In this time and place we share:  
Bread for the journey. The Cup of Blessing

## ***Prayer after Communion***

**May we be reminded that  
God's love lifts us up.**  
**May we invite the Christ to be our guest  
this day and always.**  
**May our eyes be opened to  
the presence of God beside us  
as we trust in the One who has promised  
to love us and lead us always.**  
**In life, in death, in life beyond death.**  
**God is always with us. We are never alone**

## ***♪ Bells: Hallelujah***

## ***❖ Blessing***

Because the tomb is empty, our life can be full.  
Let us go into every place and every day  
as people empowered with the love of God.

**May God bless us and may we all be  
graceful in Spirit,  
hopeful in word,  
faithful in deed.**

**May we live for the risen Christ,  
as the risen Christ lives in us.**  
Amen.

## ***Changing the Christ Candle:***

The light of Christ, shining into all the corners of the earth,  
showing us where we are and where we are meant to be.  
The Spirit of God. Breathe it in...and know that God is with  
us wherever we go.

**Sending Song: VU# 155 Jesus Christ is Risen Today**

## ***Postlude***

### **Acknowledgements**

*Seasons of the Spirit. Fusion. Easter 2021.*  
*Robin King*