

# Easter Sunday 2021

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Date: 04 April 2021

Preacher: Pastor Cathy Hall Stengel

- [ 0 : 00 ]    Thank you.  
                  Thank you.  
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- [ 2 : 30 ]    Thank you.  
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- [ 5 : 30 ]    Thank you.  
                  Thank you.  
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                  Thank you. Thank you.  
                  Thank you.
- [ 8 : 29 ]    Thank you. Thank you.  
                  Thank you.  
                  Thank you. Thank you. The peace of the peace of the peace of the risen Christ be with you.  
                  And now you can't.  
                  It is Easter.
- [ 11 : 12 ]    Thank you. Bring it in.  
                  Hear the bells, you know, He's written more and close, Alleluia, He's risen.  
                  Alleluia, Alleluia. Hear the bells ringing, they're singing, that you can be healed right now.  
                  Hear the bells ringing, they're singing, Christ, He will reveal it now. The angels, they all surround us, as they are ministering Jesus' power.  
                  Quickly now, reach out and receive Him, for this could be your glorious Son. Joy to the world, He's risen.
- [ 14 : 15 ]    Alleluia, He's risen. Alleluia, He's risen. Alleluia, Alleluia.  
                  Christ, He's risen. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.  
                  RISCARE We give back to you a reflection of our love, of our gratitude for the many blessings you have given to us.

You are merciful, you are grace-filled, and you have blessed us. Lord, we pray that you will bless these gifts, that they may be a blessing to others, transforming the world in your holy name, that they too may know your grace, they too may know your love, that they too may come to follow you in Jesus' name. Amen.

Please be seated. For those who are new with us, the folks that were in the offering piece there, they're with our sister church, so we're part of Joshua Connection, and that's a first church in Niagara Falls, so we are in partnership with them, and we do a lot of mission and ministry with them, so many of us know them.

[ 16 : 18 ] I'm so thankful to be here with all of you today, so very happy and blessed Easter to all of you today, and I'm also thankful and grateful that we can be in the house of the Lord together, and that no matter what is going on in our life, God is always there with us, and hears us, and knows us, and responds to us, and so we're going to pray together.

I invite you to pray with me. Holy God, we come together this holy day, celebrating Jesus as our risen Savior.

Lord, there are so many things in our life that we proclaim as blessings, so many things in our life that are joy-filled, and yet at the same time, there are so many things that we carry that are burdens.

There are things that are dark. There are pains, Lord, concerns in our hearts. You know the pains in our hearts, Lord. You know the troubles in our minds, and we pray that you will speak to them.

You speak your truth into our hearts and our minds, Lord. Help us to know that you are there through all of it, that even when times seem dark, that your light will shine, that your resurrection brings new life, and in every moment we can live in hope.

[ 17 : 43 ] Lord, we pray for those who are struggling in their bodies, that your touch will heal them physically, that they will have a manifestation of healing throughout their body, that pain and disease, anything broken, Lord, will be restored just as you were restored, Lord.

Restore bodies to the way you created them to be. Lord, we pray for those who are here with us now, for open hearts and open minds. Lord, we pray for a softening of hearts, that your word and your message will reach into hearts, a transformational witness, that we can leave here and be transformed by you.

And we pray for those who are not here with us, Lord, the people on our hearts, the people who could not come. We pray for your blessing upon them, that you will move in their life.

And we pray, Lord, for those who choose not to come, who have drifted away or turned away, Lord, the prodigals of the life. Lord, we pray that you will reach into their lives with your pervenient grace, and you will turn them, and you will bring them closer, draw them nearer.

We pray that if there be any scales on their eyes, or blinders over their eyes, that you will remove them, and they will see, they will see you, and they will see you through us.

[ 19 : 13 ] We pray for softened hearts in our community, and in our nation, and in our world, Lord, that people will be filled with your love, and love one another as you have commanded us.

Empower us, Lord, to be that loving presence. Empower us, Lord, to be that light in the darkness, empower us, Lord, to have hope in all circumstances, trusting in you, knowing you, for you are our God.

And it's in Jesus' holy name that we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Good morning.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. The scripture reading today is from the book of Isaiah, chapter 25, verses 6 through 9. On this mountain, the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine, the best of meats, and the finest of wines.

On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations. He will swallow up death forever.

[ 21 : 04 ] The sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces. He will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth. The Lord has spoken. In that day they will say, Surely this is our God.

We trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord. We trusted in him. Let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. A pastor tells a story about people leaving after Easter worship.

Amen. And one of the women said, or the pastor said to the woman who was a lifelong member, Wasn't it good to see all the people here today?

[ 22 : 13 ] And this woman who was coming out said, What do you think? Do you think it's going to make any difference? And he said, What? You mean the people that are here? And she said, No, Easter.

And he said, I don't understand what you mean. And she said, Do you think that Jesus being risen from the dead will make a difference in the lives of the people who are here today?

Or will they just go about their business and recognize that it was Easter again, and we had ham, or we had whatever it is we eat for Easter, and there was chocolate, chocolate, good thing, chocolate.

And the question is, What difference does Easter make? What difference does it make in this space, in our lives, in the world?

Do we recognize how good the news is that Jesus died and was raised from the dead? And we hear from Isaiah way, way before Jesus came to earth proclaiming that the word of the Lord will be fulfilled and that we will trust that the Lord is true and that our sins will be forgiven and that we will be saved.

[ 23 : 38 ] It was prophesied and prophesied and prophesied that Jesus would come. And Jesus did come. And Jesus lived. And we've been walking through the miracles through Lent.

And then here we are. It's Easter. And I'm reminded of the Bill and Gloria Gaither song, He Lives. Any of you familiar with that?

There's a variety of variations of that hymn. And it talks about that now that he lives, I don't have to worry.

I don't have to have concerns. And I don't know. I know I'm not getting the words right. But basically, I don't have to worry about tomorrow. I don't have to feel afraid.

I don't have to think about what's going to happen tomorrow. I don't have to feel uncertain. And that really touched me this Easter because I thought about it.

[ 24 : 38 ] How does Easter do that for us? So I'll tell you a personal story. And some of you have heard this before.

There are two parts to it. One is traveling around the country with a friend years ago after college. And she started talking about she's from a different faith background.

And she started talking about the fact that she thought we didn't have to believe in the resurrection of Jesus. And she'd been in the church her whole life. And I was brand new. So I didn't say anything.

I just heard what she said. And I thought about it. And I thought about it. And I prayed about it. And I prayed about it. And I'm like, do I have to believe that? Do I have to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead?

And in the northwest coast of Oregon when she went this way and I went this way and I was sitting on top of a huge rock on the coast, God spoke my name.

[ 25 : 37 ] And I knew. I knew that Jesus had been raised from the dead. And we hear in the Easter story this morning, when did Mary know that it was Jesus?

When he said her name. And so northwest coast, Kathy, Jesus' resurrection on a Sunday morning, Mary, the recognition that the risen Lord is real.

And then fast forward a lot of years when my identical twin sister had just died of cancer. And I said to God, well, it is just a matter of time before I die because we are the same.

So I know that that's what's going to happen. And a month went by and another few weeks went by and it was New Year's and I stood before God and I said, I believe in life and I am not dying.

See this, Lord? I am not dying. And if I am not dying, then I'm living. And if I'm living, then I'm going to serve a risen Lord and I'm going to live like I'm not dying.

[ 26 : 58 ] I'm not going to live like people who feel like they're dying even though they're living. I'm not going to give up on people. I'm not going to give up on hope or relationships.

I'm not going to not believe that I will be forgiven, that you will be forgiven because Jesus lives. Now, here's the thing about Easter.

There's a couple of things that people capture when they say, oh, Easter, it made a difference. I hear people, I even hear young people saying, if something happens to me, I don't have to worry about where I'm going because I believe in Jesus Christ as my Savior.

And that is a wonderful thing and we read in John 3, 16 that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

That's a promise. That's a promise. And I look around and I can scan all the way from Sue all the way over here to here.

[ 28 : 10 ] I don't see a single person who's on the verge of death. So that means whether we die in a couple of hours or in 20 years or 50 years or 100 years, it doesn't matter.

But until we're dying, we're alive. And if we're alive, then how does Easter make our lives better? We have lived through a year of Good Friday.

And I'm telling you that the difference that Easter makes is big. It's big every year but it's bigger this year because we have seen our loved ones die.

We have seen our loved ones die from outside of a building where they've been. We have trusted them into God's hands whether it was COVID or cancer or whatever it might be.

And we have prayed that God would hold them when we couldn't. But it's Easter. And the other part of Easter that people claim is forgiveness.

[ 29 : 26 ] That by Jesus' life and death and resurrection and being our Savior and we take communion and in all of that we believe and proclaim that in the name of Jesus Christ we, you and I, are forgiven.

Can I get an amen to that? Because if we're forgiven, if we know that we don't have to worry about what's going to happen when we die and we know that we're forgiven, then the permission, not just the permission, but the call is to live as though you're alive and to live as one who is forgiven.

Because it is sometimes our disbelief in God's forgiveness, truly, we believe it, but we don't claim it, sometimes has us living a dying like life where we can't quite rise up to the tallest that we can be.

We can't quite believe that forgiving others makes a difference. We can't quite believe that, well, except that one thing, I bet God can forgive me, but except for that one thing.

And we hold our guilt sometimes like a badge. and what Jesus' death and resurrection says is that in your faith that that mistake, that sin, that guilt, it's not even remembered.

[ 31 : 05 ] It's not even on the radar except for to teach us a different way of life. So if we live forgiven, if we live as though we were intended to live and not die until we are dying, what joy, what hope, what strength, what a song.

I remember as a college student we had a sunrise service up in the cemetery and when it was over we paraded down, I don't remember what the street is, it goes down in Geneseo down to the town and turns right and we paraded down that and you remember I'm relatively new at this and mostly Easter was over spring break so I missed it most every year but on that year I was there and we walked down that street and we sang Christ the Lord is risen today.

Now I barely knew the song because my family didn't go to church so I didn't know that and I found and I found myself filled like up on my tiptoes with a sense Christ the Lord is risen today and what difference does that make for me?

Well I can tell you that on that New Year's we as a family started living as though we were living. we started making memories with our children because we didn't know how much time any one of us had.

We started being intentional about the I love you's and thank you and I forgive you and I'm sorry. We started looking at the world as though what can I bring to this world as a loved forgiven not afraid of dying person.

[ 33 : 02 ] I can go on a mission trip I can go to children's disasters we are a part of something called children's disaster services and we go when there's a disaster into where children are displaced and we do activities and we help them cope with the trauma of having been flooded out or tornadoed out or possibly in the coming weeks going to be with children who've been separated from their parents.

We help them with the trauma if I didn't believe and trust that God gave me life then why would I go? Because it's hard.

Why would I go to the hospital to visit people with cancer? Why? Because it's hard. Why would I stand at a grave yesterday and offer hope to those who wonder where God is that's me and my story.

You each have your own story and my call to you is simply this. Your understanding of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is your understanding and my challenge though is does it make a difference in how you're going to live your lives tomorrow and the next day and the next day and the next day.

Maybe maybe just maybe but I believe so that if we can live as people of resurrection then surely even when it's not sunny we will bring life and light and hope wherever we go.

[ 34 : 55 ] Sure we'll have bad days. Sometimes the light just feels like it's out and we know it. We've been there but we don't stay there just like Jesus didn't stay in the grave.

We just sang up from the grave he arose and you sang it with such strength and joy and if God can give his son to die and raise him from the dead then surely God can raise us who are alive alive from the dead from the death of disappointment and anger and resentment and a sense sometimes of worthlessness or not finding our place in this world.

What does it ask us to do? It asks us to live in hope to live as ones who believe that if it's not today then maybe tomorrow.

If it's not tomorrow then maybe soon but I believe my sister has been gone for 25 years.

Well, not that long because that would make me an age I'm not. Okay, let's back that up. She's been gone over 20 years but not 25. Okay, and I would say probably between 85 and 90% of the time I have lived like I'm living and not dying.

[ 36 : 37 ] I have lived the life I've been given and not been dying while I'm living and not thinking that I was dying while I was living because at the end of the day, this day, right now, here, this minute, it's really all we have.

All that we know for sure. Now, we have children here and we hope that they have another hundred years. We have young adults here and youth and we hope that there are many, many years.

Some of us are older in age and I pray that we have years left in our lives. But may they be years of life because God created us and God promises to resurrect us even if it's just our spirit that needs resurrection.

Even if it's just the pain in our lives that needs resurrection. Even if it's relationships and it's not our body that's dying. In Jesus' life and death and resurrection, God said that he gave his one and only begotten son so that we should have eternal life in our believing in him and not perish.

And I'm asking, don't perish in this life. Don't hold grudges. Don't let relationships stay broken unless they're not safe.

[ 38 : 15 ] Don't avoid God and worship and faith no matter where you are. Because God has said, I will be with you always to the end of the age.

Living, dying, and life after death. That's a heck of a promise. So in our gratitude, may we have hope and life and be among the living.

Let's pray. Lord, how I love the sound of a child's voice. I love the sound of people in this place.

I love the sound of Easter. But most of all, God, I love you. God, I love you. And on this day, I and maybe we once again say, take me.

I believe. And in my disbelief, I will follow until I believe again. Hold me, save me, show me that I might continuously live among the living until truly I am dying.

[ 39 : 38 ] May it be so with us this day. In Jesus' risen name we pray. Amen. worship God, glorious day.

One day when heaven was filled with his praises. One day when sin was as black as could be.

Jesus came for the to be born of a virgin. Dwelled among men my example is he.

He would be king to worship and might shine among us. His glory will be revealed. Living he loved me, dying he saved me, married he carried my sins far away.

Why will he justify freely forever? One day is coming, oh glorious day, oh glorious day.

[ 41 : 24 ] one day they led him up Calvary's mountain, one day they nailed him to die on a tree, suffering anguish, despised and rejected, bearing our sins, my redeemer receive.

He had that hill of nations, drenched out on a tree, took the nails for me.

There did he love me, died and he saved me, there did he carry, my sins far away, rising he justified, freely forever.

One day is coming, oh glorious day, oh glorious day. One day the graver conceal him no longer, one day a stone rolled away from the door.

And he arose over death he had conquered, powers ascended, my Lord evermore.

[ 43 : 00 ] Death did not hold him, the grave could not keep him, rising again. he did he love me, dying he saved me, buried he carried, my sins from the way, rising he justified, freely forever, one day he's coming, oh glorious day, oh glorious day.

glorious day. glorious day. One day it's showing his sound for his coming, one day the skies with his glories will shine, one day for the mighty love and bring, my savior Jesus is mine.

Living he loved me, dying he saved me, buried he carried, my sins far away, rising he justified, freely forever, one day he's coming, oh glorious day, oh glorious day, oh glorious day, oh glorious day.

Praise God. Please be seated. Thank you. one of the ways in which we get to honor our Lord is coming to the table and as we have worshipped and as we have praised our Lord together, let us continue our worship by entering into this time of the sacrament.

will you open yourselves to the grace of Jesus Christ that is always and already available here at this table?

[ 45 : 38 ] If so, say, open us to your grace, Lord. Open us to your grace, Lord. Will you open yourselves once again to the call of Jesus Christ?

If so, say, open us to your call, Lord. Open us to your call, Lord. Will you open yourselves to the possibility of transformation through Jesus Christ?

If so, say, transform us, oh Lord. Transform us, oh Lord. As we prepare to attend the heavenly feast, we especially pray for those who have no earthly tables or no place at a table and so little daily bread.

We confess this day that we have been slow to join the dance that brings life to all, brings love to all, brings sustenance to all.

In silence, let us lift up our prayers of confession. hear this good news.

[ 47 : 02 ] God has loved you from the very beginning. The invitation of Christ is never ending. because resurrection can happen at any moment.

The Holy Spirit is transforming you even now. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. glory to God.

Amen. The risen Lord be with you. So lift up your hearts and voices. Let us give great thanks to the Lord, our God.

Holy living one, you transformed a whole lot of nothing into this amazing creation. You breathed life all around and called it good.

You invited us to the wonder of it all. And when we could not face you, you turned us around. You keep bringing us around and around, time and time again, offering the chance to join the freedom dance.

[ 48 : 16 ] And so we join with the glorious chorus of saints past and present, singing a never-ending hymn of praise. Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, and on earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna. Indeed, you are holy, and blessed is your Son, Jesus, anointed one, liberator, dance partner, sibling, and friend.

Jesus sat at tables with those who had no place and offered fulfilling food for bodies and souls. On the night in which he would give himself for us, he sat at a table with extended family, just as he hosts this table here and now with this extended family.

He offered the usual prayers of thanks to you over bread and cup, then disrupted the gathering with this unc customary word, take and eat this bread.

Whenever it is my body given for you, whenever you gather around the table together, remember me. Take and drink from this cup, each and every one of you, because it is the sign of the new covenant.

[ 50 : 00 ] The darkness has given way to the light and the resurrection dance goes on. This love is poured out for all people. Whenever you gather around the table together, remember me.

And so, my friends, we remember and we believe, Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us now. Pour out your transforming presence on the gift of this body and on the gifts of this bread and the fruit of the vine.

May it be for us your life and love, uniting us as one body, Christ's body, for the sake of loving the world.

And now, let us pray together the prayer Jesus taught us to pray. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

[ 51 : 07 ] Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. The table extends beyond this physical space.

into the space of the spirit that unites us. May this meal ready us to love, trust, and dance to the beat of God's heart.

With that, I invite you to take your elements and open the side with the bread on it first. And know that this is the body of Christ, which is given for you.

Take and receive. And this is the blood of Christ, which is shed for you.

[ 52 : 22 ] Take now and receive. on this day in which God has given us so much, let us receive this good gift.

Glory to God. Amen. Amen. Amen. Christ, the Lord, is risen today.

Hallelujah. I invite you all to stand as we worship together. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Hallelujah. Where all death is now thy sting. Hallelujah. Once he died, our souls will save.

[ 55 : 37 ] Hallelujah. Where's the victory boasting rain? Hallelujah.

So we now in Christ's land. Hallelujah. Bowling our needs, all take care.

Hallelujah. Make life here, mark him with us. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Arms across the grid, the skies. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

[ 56 : 37 ] Hallelujah. Praise to the Lord, Lord, be here. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. May we drink treasure from death.

Hallelujah. hallelujah. Hallelujah. Doing love fulfill gimmicks. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hos rest upon conical death. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Today, cancers in praise and the name of Son. Kind and kings sing. h position and angle that me. magnet UDAK 2 ornary, leader.

Alleluia Then our best in life is this Alleluia Did you know the path to prove Alleluia Those who sin and those who love Alleluia Christ is risen.



So I invite you to go from this place knowing that each and every day is Easter. We are resurrection people. Go and live in hope, in forgiveness, and knowing that God gives you everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[ 58 : 20 ] Amen. Thank you.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.