

Worship April 4, 2021

Welcome

I welcome you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Christ is Risen – Christ is risen indeed!

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The earth is shaking, are angels descending?

The tomb is before us, is the stone rolling back?

It's bright as lightening, blinding as the sun reflecting off of snow, of course we are afraid.

But we need not tremble, we need not become like the dead.

Because the tomb is empty and we are called first to worship then to go with joy *and tell the good news.*

Christ is Risen – Christ is risen indeed!

Opening Prayer

Resurrected Christ overwhelm our hearts with the Good News of this day! The empty tomb reminds us of your power over sin and death and frees us to live fully forgiven, redeemed and loved. By the strength of your Spirit, let our Alleluias fill us with such joy that we are transformed to live as your Easter people. We pray this in the beautiful name of Jesus. Amen.

Hymn

UMH #302

Christ the Lord is Risen Today

Mora UMC Praise Team

Scripture

Matthew 28:1-10

The Resurrection of Jesus

28 After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ² And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴ For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he^[a] lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead,^[b] and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." ⁸ So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

Meditation

Raised to Life Prayer

We make mistakes, we do things we regret, and we regret not doing other things. The good news of the Gospel is not only that Jesus died that we might be forgiven, but that he has been raised from the dead!

In him, we too are raised from being dead, so that we can have new life, full of hope and promise.

Can you think of a time when a surprise or change in your circumstances led you down a different path than you had planned. Maybe you were afraid to give-up on your own plans or expectations?

In 2016 I was at a high point in my career at the Dow Chemical Company. I had a somewhat unique position and a reputation for knowing what I was doing for the business I supported.

Then I got an unexpected call from the District Superintendent of the Big Waters District of the United Methodist Church, she wanted to meet for coffee. At the conclusion of our coffee meeting she was going to talk to the Bishop, and I was on my way home to talk to Rod. You see God was at work and my future was about to change.

For many years I had envisioned my retirement to be filled with volunteer work and maybe some mission work, naps (oh I love naps) and having more time for family and friends. But God had different plans for me. I was about to make major changes to my life!

In just four weeks after that coffee meeting with the District Superintendent I was appointed to the two-point charge of Ogilvie UMC and the Mora UMC as the pastor.

I announced my retirement after 34 years with my employer, Rod, my husband, after working in an office for most of his career was going to work remotely from a home office and we were moving to a community I had been to.

This change wasn't the path I expected to be on in my retirement but I know in my heart of hearts that I am exactly where I am supposed to be.

Sometimes our plans get disrupted. Or we get something we would have never expected. We make mistakes and fall short; we get caught up in "deadly" routines and behaviors - that prevent us from living fully.

One great surprise has changed the course of all our lives and enables us to move from self-made plans and expectations into the life God has created. We celebrate that reversal today.

Two women go to the tomb, a place for the dead. A guard of soldiers has been standing watch to make sure none of his disciples could steal his body and claim he was resurrected. These soldiers, policing the tomb, were to make sure Jesus "stayed dead."

BUT No human power could stop God from overcoming death. An angel announces the news and a reversal of positions. The soldiers are so afraid that they become "like dead men." Jesus lives, and those who would have him dead become deathly afraid!

The angel tells the women, "Do not be afraid." This is actually good news for them. Despite their fear, their joy about Jesus' resurrection prompts them to run and tell the other disciples the good news.

When they encounter Jesus, he says "Do not be afraid, go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

Fear no longer needs to control us, even if learning to live fearlessly doesn't come naturally.

In the book of Ephesians chapter 2: verses 4-8 we read

⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us ⁵even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—

The author of this text is Paul and he reminds us that we are deeply loved by God--loved so much that we are saved through faith in Jesus Christ.

This is the power of God--that even when we were dead in our trespasses- or the places that we sin, Jesus Christ raises us to new life. Our sin does not define who we are, or who we will be. Instead, we are forgiven and raised to life. We are called to more.

Think about what you expect out of life – where are you feeling stuck and how are you contributing to staying stuck?

My weight is an area that I am stuck. The doctors tell me that my body would feel better if I carried less weight but still – but still I like to snack.

Imagine the new life that you could have if you weren't feeling stuck, or how your life could be more abundant than it already is. Where might God be acting to change things in your life?

Knowing that Jesus has died so you are no longer chained to your sins, imagine him taking you by the hand and saying "Do not be afraid. Go and do what I have made possible." Even if you're still afraid, like the two Marys, take the next step anyway.

As we encounter the living Jesus, we are able to move forward, even if we are afraid. We do this not on our own strength but through the resurrection power that comes through Jesus Christ.

As living testimonies to God's redemptive work in Christ, we cannot keep this good news to ourselves. We are called to go out and tell the world that Jesus is risen and that this is good news for all.

Over the years our churches have shared their faith in many ways. Between our two churches we have shared our faith by

- Outreach in our neighborhoods including a ministry to the mobile home park in Mora and to the school in Ogilvie.
- Delivering meals on wheels in Mora and leadership in starting a food shelf in Ogilvie
- Years of ministry to and for youth in both churches
- Encouraging and supporting you pastor to deliver a weekly Christian radio spots
- Opening your doors to 12 step programs
- Providing space for community food distribution
- Together and individually we share the good news to those we meet
- And the list continues.

How do we continue to be living testimonies sharing the good news of Jesus Christ?

- Ask God what he is calling you to do for him and then listen for that still small voice to hear his call
- Take action on what you are called to do. It might be to start a neighborhood bible study or book study
- It might be to personally invite a young person to attend camp this summer – maybe you even offer to pay for that camp
- Perhaps you are called to volunteer for meals on wheels or serve at the food pantry
- Are you feeling called to regular prayer for your church and the world-wide church

If you feel that nudge, that call, do not hesitate because each of us is needed to share the good news of Jesus. Share your faith journey, tell the story of how you came to be a believer and follower of Christ.

Be brave and act on the nudge you feel because with God all things are possible.

Christ is Risen – Christ is risen indeed. Amen

Pastoral Prayer and Lord's Prayer

Lord, you are so patient with us. You brought us through Easter when we rejoiced at the news of the resurrection and the reality of the empty tomb. You were with us in the upper room when we remained behind locked doors due to fear, doubt and anxiety. You walked alongside us as we returned to the day to day and tried to put this moment into its right perspective. As the memory of the Easter moment starts to fade, we ask that you return to us as fully and as completely as you were that day.

Help us to make the space for you in every portion of our lives; even the everyday. Help us to find room for your love and your presence in our places of work, in our homes, in our schools and most importantly, in all those places we try to hide from you. We know that you are chasing after us, and we ask to be smart enough, and brave enough, and faithful enough to let you in.

We know without question that You come to us in our everyday lives, moving out of this pristine setting of worship into our incredibly stressed and hectic worlds. Forgive us when we aren't always ready for you and don't always see you or feel your presence. Forgive us when we see Easter as a Sunday, not as a Season, a way of life, or a fresh start.

We acknowledge that we let so many things crowd in on our lives and too often we let these distractions blurr out our awareness of your presence. Even though for some of us its hard to see the risen Jesus, one to one, we have the assurance of your presence and your love with us. Remind us to stand up and rejoice in this fact. Let us embrace that truth with both hands.

We face each day not sure that we dare to believe in your presence with us. We hear the words of our hymns and our prayers, and we still let doubts and fears enter our lives. We want to believe. We need to believe. Yet, its just too easy to believe the garbage of the world around us, or to rely on the things it provides first.

And so we come to you, Lord, with all of our fears and doubts, our joys and sorrows, and our longings and dreams. We come broken, but willing to be fixed. We bring these things to you in hope that you will hear our prayers and respond to our cries. We pray that you will peel away the scar tissue that surrounds our hearts.

As we do, we bring to you those people whom we love, and for whom issues of loneliness, pain, suffering, grief, and loss seem to abound. We long to be their shoulder to lean on and arms to share. Help us to be the face of Jesus to those who hurt.

At the same time and with the same assurance, we raise to you those who have rejoiced in new found faith, who have reconciled with loved ones, who have survived tragedy and sorrow, who are happy; and we want to dance in celebration for their good fortune.

Hear us, heal us, bless us, O Lord.

For we ask these things as an Easter People in the name of the One who was raised that we might have eternal life. We use the words that he taught each of us to us

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. 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

HYMN Thin Be the Glory Virtual Easter Choir

This was an amazing experience bringing together over 400 singers from different countries, congregations, and communities – proving that even in the midst of a pandemic we are still united.

Communion and Prayer of Thanksgiving

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said:

"Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:

"Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine.

Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory are yours, almighty Father, now and forever. **Amen.**

The body of Christ, given for you. **Amen.**

The blood of Christ, given for you. **Amen.**

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery in which you have given yourself to us.

Grant that we may go into the world in the strength of your Spirit, to give ourselves for others, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Offering

Offering Introduction

While fear can overwhelm, God shows us on this day of resurrection that there is an awesome power--to change the world, to subvert systems of injustice and to live contrary to the world as people of forgiveness and grace. This day we celebrate that God is in the restoration business, calling us into relationship and calling us home.

Special music This Is Amazing Grace with Amazing Grace Medley

Mora UMC Praise Team

Arranged by Russell Mauldin

Prayer

Thank you, great God, for restoring us, forgiving us, saving us and communing with us. Now receive these offerings as we honor you; and may they be used for your glory as we go out in the world to share these gifts with all we encounter.

HYMN

UMH #310

He Lives

Mora UMC Praise Team

Benediction

Go into the week knowing you are loved perfectly, saved eternally, and empowered as a disciple of Jesus to share God's love with everyone you meet.