

## **Easter: He Is Not Here**

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael – April 12, 2020

Easter Sunday

**Readings:** Exodus 14:10-31, 15:20-21; Isaiah 55:1-11; Ezekiel 36:24-28;  
Romans 6:3-11; Matthew 28:1-10

**Music:** Up from the Grave He Arose; Christ the Lord has Risen Today; He Is Mine

**Musicians:** Makenzie Reynolds, Dick Button, and Anita Hayden

**Greeting:** Grace and peace to you from Jesus Christ our Lord. We join together this most blessed morning to praise the Lord! Let us join together wherever we may be that we are united in the celebration of our risen Savior. That we share in the joy of knowing that the rock has been rolled away. Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

**Music:** Up from the Grave He Arose

1 Low in the grave he lay, Jesus my Savior,  
waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord!  
Up from the grave he arose;  
with a mighty triumph o'er his foes;  
he arose a victor from the dark domain,  
and he lives forever, with his saints to reign.  
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!

2 Vainly they watch his bed, Jesus my Savior,  
vainly they seal the dead, Jesus my Lord!  
Up from the grave he arose;  
with a mighty triumph o'er his foes;  
he arose a victor from the dark domain,  
and he lives forever, with his saints to reign.  
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!

3 Death cannot keep its prey, Jesus my  
Savior;  
he tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord!  
Up from the grave he arose;  
with a mighty triumph o'er his foes;  
he arose a victor from the dark domain,  
and he lives forever, with his saints to reign.  
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!

**Prayer:** Almighty God, through Jesus Christ you overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life. Grant that we, who celebrate the day of our Lord's resurrection, may, by the renewing of your Spirit, arise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness; grant us wisdom as your word is read and fill us with a spirit of understanding; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Reflection:** Let us hear the record of God's saving deeds in history, and pray that each of us may receive the fullness of this grace. Let us reflect upon God's grace and glory.

### *Israel's Deliverance at the Red Sea*

The ruler who kept God's people in slavery pursues them to the Red Sea as they try to escape. Despite a hopeless situation, God rescues God's people, leading them on dry land through the parted sea and closing the waters on their former masters. Miriam then sings a song about God's marvelous deliverance.

*As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked back, and there were the Egyptians advancing on them. In great fear the Israelites cried out to the Lord. They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, 'Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness." But Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still."*

*Then the Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to go forward. But you lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the Israelites may go into the sea on dry ground. Then I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and so I will gain glory for myself over Pharaoh and all his army, his chariots, and his chariot drivers. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gained glory for myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his chariot drivers."*

*The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from in front of them and took its place behind them. It came between the army of Egypt and the army of Israel. And so the cloud was there with the darkness, and it lit up the night; one did not come near the other all night.*

*Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh's horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. At the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, "Let us flee from the Israelites, for the Lord is fighting for them against Egypt."*

*Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers." So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.*

*Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.*

*Then the prophet Miriam, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. And Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea."*

*(Exodus 14:10-31; 15:20-21 NRSV\*)*

God our Savior, as once you delivered by the power of your mighty arm your chosen Israel through the waters of the sea, so now deliver your Church and all the peoples of the earth from bondage and oppression, to rejoice and serve you in freedom, through Jesus Christ our Deliverer. Amen.

### *Salvation Offered Freely to All*

The prophet Isaiah issues an invitation of abundant life to the hungry and thirsty.

*Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.*

*Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

*For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:1-11 NRSV\*)*

Creator of all things, you freely offer water to the thirsty and food to the hungry. Refresh us by the water of baptism and feed us with the bread and wine of your table, that your Word may bear fruit in our lives, and bring us all to your heavenly banquet; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### *A New Heart and a New Spirit*

The prophet promises that God will renew God's people. God will replace their heart of stone with a new heart.

*I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. (Ezekiel 36:24-28 NRSV\*)*

God of holiness and light, in the mystery of dying and rising with Christ you have established a new covenant of reconciliation. Cleanse our hearts and give a new spirit to all your people, that your saving grace may be made known to the whole world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### *Buried and Raised with Christ in Baptism*

The apostle Paul reminds us that in Christ we have already died, drowned in baptism. Yet we who have died are raised to newness of life.

*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.*

*For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 6:3-11 NRSV\*)*

**Music:** Christ the Lord is Risen Today

1 Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!  
 Earth and heaven in chorus say, Alleluia!  
 Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!  
 Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia!

2 Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!  
 Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!  
 Death in vain forbids him rise, Alleluia!  
 Christ has opened paradise, Alleluia!

3 Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia!  
 Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!  
 Once he died our souls to save, Alleluia!  
 Where's thy victory, boasting grave? Alleluia!

4 Soar we now where Christ has led, Alleluia!  
 Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!  
 Made like him, like him we rise, Alleluia!  
 Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!

**Sermon:** Our Gospel reading for today comes from the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 28, verses 1 through 10.

*After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. 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. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me." (Matthew 28:1-10 NRSV\*)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

One phrase kept pulling me back this week, and I think it is because of everything going on. I could just give a normal Easter message today. Pretend that everything is normal and just give an Easter sermon that doesn't look at where we are right now. But that would be ignoring everything that's happened over the last few weeks and what will continue in the weeks to come. I can't help but

look at this through the lens of now. What is it we need to hear right now? And that is exactly what we find in today's reading from Matthew. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to the tomb. They are looking for Jesus. They were looking for answers. And it was the poignant answer they got at the empty tomb. He is not here. That answer stuck with me. Saying it in this empty church gives it a new meaning. HE IS NOT HERE. HE IS RISEN! It rings out. It echoes. For the two Marys it was a marked statement that the thing they were coming to lament was no more. That Jesus was gone. But more important for us today isn't the idea of "Jesus isn't here" as much as "Jesus isn't where you expected" that is important to us this blessed day.

I say this because being home is not what most of you would have had in mind for Easter. There would be sunrise and flowers. There would be breakfast and hugs. We would be filling these pews and singing. We would come here to celebrate our risen Savior. We might be missing that feeling right now. So I echo the words of the tomb. He is not here. He is risen! But what do I mean? That just as Christ being raised was more than just knowing the location of his body, Christ being raised is more than the location of his body, his people, now. That is to say, Christ isn't merely here or there, but Christ is wherever we are. That he transcended the grave, not that we would be tied to a location but that we would be tied to hope. Yes, I miss all of you. Yes, I wish we could be here today. But more than that, I'm excited. Because I know that we are bound together in life that transcends death. We are bound together in truth and in love. We are bound together with a bond that no distance can tear apart. We are together to celebrate that God is with us, even when we are not in the same room. We come together because Christ is risen no matter where we are.

Where was Jesus? Not in the tomb. But where was he? He was where his followers were! He was there on the road, appearing to the two women where they were. And his message? Go tell the others, and they will see me there. Go spread the news and I will be with them too. The message was that Christ would be where they would be. He would be with the people who needed him. That they didn't need to look in a tomb. That they didn't need to look in a specific place because he wasn't tied down to any specific place. He was wherever he was needed. He is wherever he is needed. He is wherever his followers are. I take a great comfort in that thought.

We gather together here, not because it is the only place where Christ is to be found, but we gather knowing that this is where we come to experience Christ together. But I want to remind you that we experience Christ together whenever we gather and how ever we gather. But we are still

together. If we can join together with those blessed saints that have gone on before us, surely, we can join together with our neighbors in spirit! We are still the church! We are still God's people. The sun still rose this morning. The tomb is still empty! Which means that we still have hope!

I want us all to take heed of that final command from today's Gospel lesson. Do not be afraid. Go and tell. Do not be afraid. Spread the news of your Messiah. Do not be afraid of what is going on. Praise the Lord that we still reside in God's grace! Do not be afraid of how long this will last. Celebrate that we are in God's glory! Do not be afraid! We are still the church! Do not be afraid! He is not here for he has been raised from the dead and indeed is going ahead of you! Christ will be wherever you are and wherever you go! He will be going ahead of that you may know that God is with you in love. That God is with you in abundant mercy.

The resurrection came only after the darkest of nights and the most troubling of days. The great joy was found not from joy upon joy but born from a great sorrow. Hope was not simply a matter of hearing or saying the right words. Hope was born from a community of believers sharing in the wondrous love of Christ. A community of believers huddled together in fear of what an uncertain future would bring. Not expecting the wonderful news they were about to receive. We may be in times that trouble our hearts, our minds, our bodies, our souls. But we have already tasted a bitter death. We share in Christ's death on the cross to share in his resurrection. We share in that beautiful life beyond life. We share in hope eternal in a love that is beyond measure. Given that we could be free! Free to care. Free to love. Free to give. Free to live.

Christ is Risen! He is not here, but he is everywhere! Do not be afraid! God is with us to the end of the age! God is with us in the dark and the light! God is with us this glorious morning, wherever we are! And God unites us across all divides, through any walls, bridging any distance. Because God is bigger than a place and a day! God is the God of all things! May the Lord bless you and keep you! May you be reminded of his steadfast love that endures forever! And may we always remember that Christ is with us. Yesterday. Today. Tomorrow. For eternity. No grave can trap that boundless joy, and that joy is in our hearts, always. Always. Amen.



**Prayer of Confession and Pardon:** Lord, forgive us we pray. We come before you as those who have sinned against you in what we say and do. We come before you as those who have sinned against you in what we do not say and what we do not do. It is in our doings and our failings that we seek your grace and your mercy. We haven't loved you how we should. We haven't loved each other how we should. We are a people who are sorry, who humbly seek your forgiveness. Help us to live with one another in your mercy and your grace. Let us always remember the sacrifice made by our Risen Savior, Jesus Christ, that we may understand your deep love for us. May we honor that love by sharing it with one another, loving as you love and caring as you care. Help us to be of one body redeemed by one blood, serving one God. Amen.

**Offering:** If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed in the weekly update. If you are interested in online giving, please contact me. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

**Music:** He Is Mine

1. There is a Shepherd who cares for His own, and He is mine; Nothing am I, He's a King on a throne, but He is mine; How can He love such a sinner as I, though He is mine, I cannot fathom though often I try, but He is mine. He is mine; He is mine; Though it is wonderful, yet it is true, That He is mine.

2. Jesus left Heaven my Savior to be, and He is mine; I am not worth all He suffered for me, but He is mine; Though I'm not worthy He dwells in my heart, and He is mine; From Him I'll never, no,

never depart, for He is mine. He is mine; He is mine; Though it is wonderful, yet it is true, That He is mine.

3. There is a Comforter come from above, He, too, is mine, Coming to me to reveal Jesus' love, and that is mine; Shepherd and Savior, and Comforter, too, They all are mine; That's why I know the old story is true, They all are mine. He is mine; He is mine; Though it is wonderful, yet it is true, That He is mine.

**Dismissal with Blessing:** We are sent forth in the power of Christ's resurrection. Alleluia! The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Until we meet again. **Amen.**

**Prayer List**

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
John & Angie Veach	Diane Washburn	Bill Calvert	Eric Veach
Cathy Devall	Brock McMorris	Ed & Verna Titus	Hayden Kanizer
Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Laura Eubank Allison	Nancy Sowers
Dave Yaw	Aaron Carrell	Cindy Cisney	Patti Corder & Crew
Joyce Sly	Nancy Hoke	John Millsap	Larry Sidwell
Don Wells	Tricia Adkins	Ty Bradley	Ronnie & Elaine Carlen
Jerry Jackson	Pat Nebel	Don Stewart	Earlene Shupe
Brenda Hurt	Sharron Button	Anne Winkler Heinrichs	
Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Nora Werner & Family	Wayne & Charlotte Carrell
Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Lois Woolever	Mary White	Nick Nichols
Greg Williams	Eloise Buffenmeyer	Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter
Paul Schulte	Lyle Whitley	Tammy Fischer and Children	

Offerings may be mailed to your local treasurer or addressed to:

Rev Camron D St.Michael

PO Box 54, Charleston IL, 61920

**Copyright:** "Easter Vigil, or The First Service of Easter," Copyright © 1979, 1986 by Abingdon Press; Copyright © 1992 UMPH. Greeting, Opening Prayer, Introduction to the Service of the Word, collect for The Creation, collect for The Covenant between God and the Earth, and collect for A New Heart and a New Spirit from *The Book of Common Prayer* (The Episcopal Church, 1979), 285-291 (Citations from the BCP are Public Domain).

\* Scripture quotations are from New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

## **4/12/2020 Update from Pastor Cameron**

Greetings! Time for a weekly update!

We are continuing in our efforts to do no harm, to do good, and to stay in love with God. To do no harm, we must make sure that we do what we can for social distancing to help prevent the spread of the current Coronavirus. To do good, we must offer support and compassion to one another in this difficult time. And to stay in love with God, we remember to pray to God and to worship. Even if that means we worship from home. I thank all of you for your patience as we navigate this difficult time.

I am still looking for pictures and music to share in services. We will have at the least two more weeks of online services, so anything you'd like to share is always welcome.

Please let me know of any updates or anyone that is in need of special consideration. I have been having to adapt my schedule to make room for the extra effort involved in making the online worship experience possible and with adapting my schedule to include leading lessons for the kids.

As we continue in the current stay at home order, we are also facing economic problems. Legislation has been passed that will offer economic relief for some. However, we must be prepared as a church to support each other and support those in need. This may have a longer lasting impact than the virus and I urge everyone to be in prayer. Also, be in contact with each other. Please check in on people and let us remain a close-knit community, even when we are practicing safe social distancing.

We do have guidance for a live communion service, but it would need to be done in a live video feed. If anyone is interested in helping put this together, please let me know.

I will be continuing to have our worship services online and in print! It is on YouTube and a link can be found on my website as listed below. I am also posting the information on the church Facebook page. If there is anything you would like to contribute, let me know! There will also be printed materials available at the churches to pick up. Please feel free to contact me for more information. If anyone is interested in doing music for any upcoming service, please let me know. There are many options for doing this. I can also share readings or any other video that you'd like to make part of the service. Participation is welcome!

Also, in this time we are still working to keep the bills paid, our missions supported, our apportionments met, and our outreach working. As such, we do need your continued financial support as part of the church. Offerings may be sent to your local treasurer or to the PO Box listed below. I can also arrange to pick them up if I am delivering anything to you. I am personally grateful for all your continued support in this difficult time. I cannot stress enough that the church is still active and we are still together.

If anyone is interested in online groups or interested in how to form one, I am available to help. There are free tools available to be able to still meet online for Sunday School or other meetings.

Please see the CDC website for information on the Coronavirus. Make sure to wash your hands, as it is the best way to keep from spreading the virus. If you are not feeling well, running a temperature, or otherwise seem to be taking ill, stay at home and let someone know. That way someone can check in if you get worse and you won't risk spreading anything to others. If you are needing someone to pick up things at the store and don't feel you should be out, contact a friend or myself. I will be doing shopping for people as needed for those who do not want to be out. I personally am volunteering as a younger adult who is not at high risk in order to help anyone who needs it. Please feel free to call me and I can make arrangements to help with anything you might need delivered. If you do go out, please follow all distancing guidelines, and if you can, cover your face. Please let others know, and together we will all see this through safely.

Please stay safe. You are all in my prayers. I will keep you updated as best I can. If you have any questions, feel free to contact your Church Council Chair or myself.

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael

<https://stmichael.pw>

[cdstmichael@outlook.com](mailto:cdstmichael@outlook.com)

(316)530-3182 (call or text)

PO Box 54, Charleston IL 61920