

The Tomb: He is Risen

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael – April 5 2026

Easter Sunday

Readings: Acts 10:34-43; Colossians 3:1-4; Matthew 28:1-10 CEB

Reflection: Psalm 118:17-24

Call to Worship: Look, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Corinthians 15)

Prayer: Everlasting God, through Jesus Christ you overcame death and opened to us the door of eternal life. You have felt our pain and our sorrow and seen fit to give us hope. Renew and refresh us in your Holy Spirit as we celebrate the miracle of the empty tomb. Let us celebrate the joy that we find in your steadfast love and faithfulness. Let the light of our Lord's resurrection lift our hearts on this day. Guide us and lead us in worship this day so that we may praise your name. Lift up our hearts that we may sing of your miraculous salvation. May your love bless us this day so that we may love one another more deeply. Help us to celebrate the empty tomb as a sign of your great love for us. May we be freed from slavery to sin and death and arise into a life of righteousness through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 118:17-24

¹⁷ I won't die—no, I will live and declare what the Lord has done. ¹⁸ Yes, the Lord definitely disciplined me, but he didn't hand me over to death. ¹⁹ Open the gates of righteousness for me so I can come in and give thanks to the Lord! ²⁰ This is the Lord's gate; those who are righteous enter through it. ²¹ I thank you because you answered me, because you were my saving help. ²² The stone rejected by the builders is now the main foundation stone! ²³ This has happened because of the Lord; it is astounding in our sight! ²⁴ This is the day the Lord acted; we will rejoice and celebrate in it! (Psalm 118:17-24 CEB+)

We read the words of the Psalm and hear of how God saves us from death. That we are given salvation in our Lord. That the stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone. The unexpected has happened, and we see that Christ is not dead but he is risen. How are you celebrating the resurrection of our Lord? Who can you be lifting up in your joyful prayers in the week ahead? What can you do to help out a neighbor in need? How can we prepare our hearts and our lives to be ready for all things with Christ?

Prayer: O God, our light, our beauty, our rest: In the resurrection of your Son you have brought us into your new creation. Form us into your people and order our lives in you. We thank you for all you have already done and the great love that has been shown to us. We lift up our joys and our concerns, bringing all things before you. We share with you the worries that we have spoken aloud. We share the celebrations that we have shared together. Help us

to also share the silent pleadings from within. May we experience your grace in our laughter and our tears as you guide us through the unknown. May you strengthen us in sorrow and in rejoicing, knowing you are with us. Help us to remember the miracle of the empty tomb on this day. And may you guide us in love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Alleluia.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the Common English Bible. Our first reading is from Acts chapter 10, verses 34 through 43.

³⁴ Peter said, "I really am learning that God doesn't show partiality to one group of people over another. ³⁵ Rather, in every nation, whoever worships him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶ This is the message of peace he sent to the Israelites by proclaiming the good news through Jesus Christ: He is Lord of all! ³⁷ You know what happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism John preached. ³⁸ You know about Jesus of Nazareth, whom God anointed with the Holy Spirit and endowed with power. Jesus traveled around doing good and healing everyone oppressed by the devil because God was with him. ³⁹ We are witnesses of everything he did, both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰ but God raised him up on the third day and allowed him to be seen, ⁴¹ not by everyone but by us. We are witnesses whom God chose beforehand, who ate and drank with him after God raised him from the dead. ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."
(Acts 10:34-43 CEB+)

Our second reading is from Colossians chapter 3, verses 1 through 4.

***3** Therefore, if you were raised with Christ, look for the things that are above where Christ is sitting at God's right side. ² Think about the things above and not things on earth. ³ You died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory. (Colossians 3:1-4 CEB+)*

Our final reading is from Matthew chapter 28, verses 1 through 10.

***28** After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the tomb. ² Look, there was a great earthquake, for an angel from the Lord came down from heaven. Coming to the stone, he rolled it away and sat on it. ³ Now his face was like lightning and his clothes as white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so terrified of him that they shook with fear and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, "Don't be afraid. I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He isn't here, because he's been raised from the dead, just as he said. Come, see the place where they laid him. ⁷ Now hurry, go and tell his disciples, 'He's been raised from the dead. He's going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there.' I've given the message to you." ⁸ With*

great fear and excitement, they hurried away from the tomb and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹But Jesus met them and greeted them. They came and grabbed his feet and worshipped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t be afraid. Go and tell my brothers that I am going into Galilee. They will see me there.” (Matthew 28:1-10 CEB+)

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

This morning we proclaim that the tomb is empty and he is risen. The last time we were here on a Sunday morning, I asked you to keep the darkness and the pain of the crucifixion in your heart throughout Holy Week. I asked that you bring it back here to the tomb, so that when we see the stone rolled away that we could celebrate. That we could rejoice fully because we have seen the miracle of our Lord. We have been pushed to the depths of despair because of his suffering and death, and that now when we return to the tomb, we find the stone rolled away and we find joy.

When we see the women going to the tomb, they are going still with sorrow. This sorrow is the sorrow that we ourselves are bringing back to the tomb today. This sorrow is at the loss of a teacher and a friend. This sorrow is from what they thought was the end of something meaningful. They come to look at the tomb, but when they get there, they see that an angel of the Lord has rolled the stone away so that they can see that it is empty. They're told he isn't here because he has been raised from the dead, just as he said, and they are given a message to take to the disciples: He's been raised from the dead, and you will see him again. On their way to go give this message, they meet Jesus on the road. He appears first to those women who came full of sorrow to that tomb. He tells them that he is going to Galilee. The disciples will see him there. This triumph is our triumph. This joy is our joy because this story is our story.

We have been on a journey, and it's a journey that is well laid out in Acts. Peter understands that this is not about one moment, but this is about how that one moment is the culmination of everything. Peter lays out the entire ministry of Jesus. He came to give good news. He is baptized in the river Jordan. He begins his public ministry. They speak of the travels Jesus took, the many people that he reached. Peter speaks of all the people that were healed because of Christ. That he preached a message of peace for all to hear. That he helped those who were hurting. He speaks of how Jesus proclaimed the good news of God's kingdom. Peter and the other disciples are witnesses to all of what Christ did, including his death and resurrection. The powers that be put him to death on a cross, hoping that would be the end of things. But God raised him up. Peter gives the purpose that is our purpose as well. “He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

We have found salvation at the empty tomb. Because as we live in Christ, we die in Christ, and we are raised in Christ. And “if you were raised with Christ, look for the things that are above where Christ is sitting at God's right side.” As we hear in Colossians, that our life is in Christ. And if our life is in Christ, then our story is in Christ. Our hope is in Christ. Our life, our death, our resurrection, our everything is in him. That we are bound together by that love, that strength, that unity, that hope, and that peace. And it all comes together because the story is complete. This is a story that we all share in together. It is a reminder that we still have hope. A reminder that we are loved. When they come to the tomb, they come seeking closure.

Instead, they are surprised by joy. They are surprised by hope. They are given a message to share with the world. A message given to those women that simply went to the tomb with love in their hearts. But Christ is revealed to them in glory. It is part of the story that we tell because it is a part of our own story. It is a story we tell because his resurrection is our resurrection. Their joy is our joy. And we share in hope together.

I asked you to walk with that sorrow, the depth of despair and hurt we find in Christ's death, because knowing that sorrow brings us to the height of our joy. Feeling the death of Christ in our hearts allows us to celebrate with full joy the resurrection of God's son. Acknowledging the pain and the hurt and the loss gives us the ability to empathize with those who are hurting and those who are suffering. Because we remember that we hurt and we suffer with Christ as we are raised and healed in Christ. That he is our all in all. Because it is our reminder that we have hope no matter how dark things get, because the light will always shine. We come to the tomb to see he is risen because it brings our story together. To understand all that he taught so that we may fully live by his word. We understand his life and his teachings so that we understand his death. We understand his resurrection so we understand life itself. And we learn to be kind, to be compassionate, to be caring, to be patient, to be trusting, to be generous. We do these things because we have seen the power that they have. We have seen the way that they can change the world. And now we let that story be our story and we let that song be our song because he is risen. He's in the world today. He is in each and every one of us.

This blessed Easter let us celebrate the unity and the joy that we find in the resurrection of our Savior. That as we return to his tomb and find it empty that we may celebrate with our whole heart that we have been set free from slavery to sin and death, and we have been given life everlasting because of our Savior. That our joy may be made complete and that we now have a story to tell to everyone who can hear because they can make it their story as well. Because each one of us becomes another chain in this never-ending tale, in this never-ending supper that we share, in this never-ending cycle of love. Because as we see pain and suffering, we see salvation and hope. As we see heartache and grief, we see joy and celebration because we know that no matter what, God is with us. And the message of Easter is that there is always something more. It's up to us to go out and to tell people. It is up to us to raise our voice and to sing, to shout it from the rooftops. He is risen. So let us celebrate this Easter with love and friendship because Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Amen. Hallelujah.

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 below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Current Series – The Tomb

Our series for Easter is a two-part series that follows Christ from the triumphant entry into Jerusalem through the crucifixion and to the resurrection. We call it “The Tomb” as we see him laid to rest and then witness that he is risen. We explore the journey that we take through the passion and into the resurrection, following Christ always. Let us remember the tomb where sorrow is laid to rest and hope is born.

3/29: Laid to Rest

4/5: He Is Risen

Neoga Grace UMC

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Neoga, IL 62447

(217)895-2809

Worship 10:30am

Toledo UMC

Madison & Ohio St

PO Box 267

Toledo, IL 62468

Worship 8:15am

Etna UMC

2799 Etna Rd

Mattoon, IL 61938

Worship 9:30a

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