

## Introduction

If you are new today, welcome. We worship every Sunday at 10:30 and you are always welcome to join us. If you are new, you also don't know me. I'm Drew, and my wife and I moved here a year ago from Southern California. I always lived in Southern California, and when I tell folks here that I actually kinda like the weather, I can *hear* their eyes rolling. But hear me out. I think today actually highlights what I mean. Here, weather changes and it gives us visual glimpses of the change that God brings into our lives. Right now, there is so much life sprouting. Flowering trees, grass growing tall, plants coming out of the sidewalk cracks, birdsong fills the mornings. New life is here. I love being reminded that God brings new life. On Easter morning, we celebrate new life, we celebrate the resurrection of the Lord and the power that resurrection has in our life to bring the salvation of new life and victory over sin and death.

I love that Easter in church has a catch phrase. He is risen. He is risen indeed! The moment that Jesus was raised from the dead is the single most significant event in human history. It is the cornerstone of our faith, a cornerstone built from the stone that the builders had rejected. The resurrection of Jesus is an event that we must never take for granted or underestimate. The resurrection is magnificent and vital. It is vital to our faith and to our lives. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15 tells us that if Christ had not been raised from the dead, our faith would be futile. And, if Christ had not been raised, we would have no hope of being raised after we die, for Christ is the firstfruits of our own eternal life. For as all

die because of one man, Adam, so all will be made alive because of one man, Christ. Death is defeated; eternal life is here. Every Sunday we gather, we are celebrating the resurrection, but today, we celebrate it exclusively and give it our full attention. Easter is here, Resurrection Sunday is here, the tomb that was filled with the body of a crucified man on Friday is now empty. Christ is risen. He is risen, indeed.

## **Yosemite**

Hallelujah. Praise the Lord. The Hallelujah chorus from Handel's Messiah, which we will hear at the end of the service, is a special song for all sorts of reasons, but it is especially special in the lore of the Hanson family. My family was a roadtrip kind of family. One year, we were driving to Yosemite. Yosemite is probably an 8-hour drive from San Diego, and we filled the time with music. Fortunately for my brother, sister, and me, my parents have good taste in music. Unfortunately for my brother, sister, and me, they decided to ignore their good taste and play classical music. I think they thought that making young children listen to classical music made them smarter. I wish that were the case...Anyways, one of the classical music albums my parents had was Handel's Messiah. So we listened to the whole thing. If I sat down and listened to the Messiah today, I would appreciate the way that Handel told the story of Christ's life through wonderful music. But when I was nine-years-old, come on...

So we enter Yosemite National Park while listening to this boring to a nine-year-old music. When you enter Yosemite from the

south, you drive for a long time before getting to the good stuff, to the famous Yosemite Valley. You go up and down switchbacks, lots of winding, and finally through a long tunnel going uphill. So we're driving up this tunnel which is lit enough to drive in but is very dark compared to daylight, and when we get to the end of the tunnel, our car is flooded by light and there it is, the most spectacular view that you'll ever see in the natural world, in my biased opinion. You are at the top of this valley and the view seems endless and you see Half Dome and El Capitan rock face and a few magnificent waterfalls. But what was even more spectacular was the timing of our exit from the tunnel. At the moment light flooded into our car, at the moment of the first glimpse of this exquisite view, we heard this...

The Hallelujah Chorus began the moment we saw what I think is the most spectacular view in the world. All of us in the car looked around at each other and we all said something to the effect of, "You heard that too, right?" The timing, the view, the song, it was magnificent. But I tell you this whole story because it pales in comparison to the magnificence of Christ's resurrection. And when we experience something so magnificent, it alters our lives forever. He is risen. He is risen, indeed.

## **Indeed**

That word, indeed, kept popping up in my head this week as I thought about what to say this morning. Indeed is a word used to emphasize a statement or a response confirming something already suggested. So when we say, He is risen indeed, we are

emphasizing and confirming that we believe that Christ has been raised. To emphasize and confirm that we believe the resurrection is central to the Christian life. I believe that this Easter, we are invited or reinvited to have a faith that says, “Indeed!” to the resurrection. We are called to have an indeed faith, a faith that emphasizes and confirms the power of the resurrection to others. This indeed faith is shown to us beautifully in this morning’s text by two Mary’s: Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, most likely the mother of James, a disciple of Jesus. These two women show us three ways that we can live the indeed faith. First, they are faithful. Second, they are reminded to not fear. And third, they experience the risen Lord.

## **Faithfulness**

These two women followed Jesus to his death and witnessed the crucifixion. They witnessed their teacher get nailed to a cross and saw him breathe his last breath. For most of us, witnessing this would have been the end of it. There’s no coming back from being crucified. It appeared that death and evil had won. Yes, Jesus mentioned being raised but come on, that doesn’t actually happen. Maybe Jesus was being metaphorical. So everyone else, his disciples, the crowds that shouted Hosanna a week before, they all left. Perhaps they grieved in different ways, perhaps they had simply moved on, perhaps they were afraid to be in public, as we know the disciples were. But these two Mary’s were faithful, perhaps it was the only thing they knew how to do. Visit the tomb. Weep. Grieve. Pray.

Likewise, when we live an indeed faith, there will be times when it seems like God is not there. Days when it will feel more like Good Friday than Resurrection Sunday. Days when it feels that violence or sin or death have the last word. In those times, take up the example of these two Mary's. Continue on in your faithfulness to the Lord. There are so many Psalms that essentially say everything is going wrong, it may even be God's fault, *and yet* we will worship and follow the Lord. I am sick *and yet*... I am grieving *and yet*... I see violence and evil around me *and yet*... I walk through the valley of the shadow of death *and yet*... We are faithful because, even in the valley of the shadow of death, God is with us. The resurrection confirms that. Because our God is a God of resurrection, we *always* have hope. I've been the pastor of this church for less than a year, and I've seen folks stay faithful through illness, injury, and the death of a loved one. That faithfulness inspires mine, just as the faithfulness of these two Mary's inspire us all. You don't need to have it all together or know everything about the Bible or check off any boxes you have in your mind to be faithful. You just need hope. Resurrection brings hope. You just need to say "Indeed" when another says, "He is risen."

## **Do Not Fear**

The second thing we learn about how to live an indeed faith is to not fear. Twice the Mary's are told not to fear. Near the beginning of our text this morning it says after the women appeared at the tomb that, "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.” We don’t think of angels as scary, but to experience such an other-worldly event would have been terrifying. It was so scary in fact that the next verse says this: “For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men.” These men faint from fear in the sight of this angel, and the women don’t, because immediately the angel turns to the women and says, “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.” Do not be afraid. You’re looking for Jesus and he is not here for he has been raised. Those words, just a single word in Greek, changed the course of human history. He has been raised. Jesus defeated our surest and oldest enemy, death. If God can defeat death and our God is present with us, whom shall we fear? Then the women live out this indeed faith. When the angel says, “He has been raised,” the women did not say, “He has been raised, indeed!” Instead, they live out the indeed. They immediately run to find the disciples, showing us again the first point of faithfulness. No dilly dallying or thinking about how they’re going to say what they’re going to say to the disciples, *they go*. When we learn of Christ’s resurrection, we are called to go, in faithfulness and hope.

## Experience

And then, as if hearing all this from an angel was not enough, on their way to tell the disciples they experience the risen Lord Jesus. And this is where all three points come together. The text says, “ 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.”

They show faithfulness by holding his feet and worshiping him when they see him. They are reminded again, “Do not be afraid.” And the third way for us to have an indeed faith: they experience the risen Lord. They experience Jesus. And before I dig into that, I can't help that Jesus calls women to be the first preachers of the good news of resurrection. What a mighty calling these women have.

We can all experience the risen Lord, albeit probably not exactly the way these two Mary's did. We experience Jesus by the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. And we can sense the Holy Spirit through reading and hearing Scripture, praying, meditating, having fellowship with other Christians, serving, worshiping. In worship, especially, we are invited to experience Jesus through the sacraments of communion and baptism. Experiencing and listening to Jesus was why we spent time during Lent practicing Spiritual Disciplines together. If we are to live an indeed faith, a faith that says “Indeed!” to the resurrection,

then we need to be faithful in all circumstances, we need to live out of hope and not fear, and we need to find ways to be open to experiencing Jesus.

## **Conclusion**

Christ is risen. He is risen, indeed. We did not make “Christ is risen” happen, but we can make the “indeed” happen. Our lives can be a living indeed. We can emphasize and confirm the resurrection by being faithful, by not fearing, and by experiencing Jesus. When we embrace this Indeed faith, we can be like the two Mary’s, and spread the good news of Jesus’ resurrection to the world. We worship today in the joy of new life in Christ, let’s go from this place using that joy to love our neighbors. Every time I go to Yosemite, I think of the Hallelujah chorus that we’ll hear soon. Every time we celebrate Easter, we should think of the power of the resurrection, the joy it brings, the hope it provides. Let’s go from this place and be the indeed to Christ is risen. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!