

Call to Worship

Pete invites the congregation to stand and turn to the back of the bulletin for the Call to Worship. Just then, Robyn yells from the back,

“Wait!”

and hurries forward. She climbs the steps, turns, and tells everyone in a loud voice:

“The tomb is empty. Jesus is not there.

He is raised from the dead like he said he would be!”

Pete then says:

“Why don’t you lead us?”

And she does...

One: The Lord is risen.

All: *The Lord is risen indeed!*

One: Let us worship with the communion of saints,
made alive in Christ.

**All: *We rejoice in what God has done, and what God
is yet to do.***

One: The Lord is risen.

All: *The Lord is risen indeed!*

by Tim Harvey, pastor
Oak Grove Church of the Brethren
Roanoke, Virginia

Please remain standing and join in the hymn,
“They crucified my Savior,” #266

Opening Prayer

Oh Lord, what a morning! Your Son has defeated death. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. The world was forever changed as your kingdom came to earth. May we hear anew this story and marvel at what it means. May we find new wonder in the good news of Christ’s return to the living. Today may we all be made alive again through him. Amen.

by Rev. Kathryn Craven, Presbyterian, Wisconsin
<http://ruachwords.org/2016/03/05/easter-morning-c-march-27-2016/>

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

¹ O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures forever!

² Let Israel say,
“His steadfast love endures forever.”

¹⁴ The LORD is my strength and my might;
he has become my salvation.

¹⁵ There are glad songs of victory
in the tents of the righteous:
“The right hand of the LORD does valiantly;

¹⁶ the right hand of the LORD is exalted;
the right hand of the LORD does valiantly.”

¹⁷ I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of the LORD.

¹⁸ The LORD has punished me severely,
but he did not give me over to death.

¹⁹ Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the LORD.

²⁰ This is the gate of the LORD;
the righteous shall enter through it.

²¹ I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.

²² The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.

²³ This is the LORD’s doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.

²⁴ This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

1 Corinthians 15:19-26

¹⁹ If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. ²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. ²¹ For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; ²² for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴ Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Returning our Tithes and Offerings

Let us pray.

God of majesty, we are astonished at your miraculous power! You raised Jesus Christ from the dead. You made him the first of a huge multitude to receive your ultimate gift, eternal life. Thank you for fulfilling and even exceeding your promises. Now Christ reigns with you and prays for us. Help us to joyfully tell others your good news of salvation. Receive our tithes, offerings, and gifts for the sake of our risen Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Ushers?

prayer by Rosanna Anderson
Associate Director of Stewardship Ministries
United Methodist Church

<http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/offertory-prayers-and-invitation-for-march-2016>

Imagining Gospel

[2 persons (one being Robyn, the worship leader) are assigned ahead of time to quietly go out as Pete introduces the gospel reading, and silently recruit helpers who will assist in acting it out. Robyn will tap at least 3 other females, if not more (priority being children and youth), to be the women in this story – the # of which is not specified in this scripture. These “women” will then gather in the back of the sanctuary. The other person will tap a young male and take him to the baptismal passage behind the organ, where both will put on the white bathrobes hanging there. These two leaders will guide (without words) their “recruits” through the acting out of this scripture. They will also be the only speakers at the appropriate moments (memorize the words!).]

Introduction

On this Easter morning, we remember what happened on the third day after Jesus was crucified and laid in a tomb. If you were here for the sunrise service, you heard how gospel storyteller John remembered the event, which is different from Luke’s version, which we will soon retell. According to John, it was only one woman, Mary of Magdala, who came to where they had laid Jesus’ body, and found the tomb empty. She ran back to the disciples with the news, which led Peter and an unnamed disciple “whom Jesus loved” to run to the tomb. They also found it empty, but also saw the linen in which Jesus’ body had been wrapped, sitting there neatly folded. After they left, Mary returned and met first – two angels, and then the risen Christ, whom she mistook as the gardener. She recognized him as he spoke her name, and returned with this message, “I have seen the Lord.”

As I said, we will read Luke’s account. While the versions of Matthew and Mark are somewhat similar, they also are different. In all the gospel accounts, however, there is this agreement: the stone covering the entrance of the tomb has inexplicably been rolled away and the body of Jesus is not there. And the first witnesses of his resurrection are women... So now, let’s allow ourselves to imagine that morning, as remembered by Luke. It has been a difficult week end for the followers of Jesus. On Friday, he died on a cross. Quickly, before sundown and the start of the Jewish Sabbath, when no work should be done, his broken body was taken down and rushed to the cemetery, with just enough time to place him inside a cave and roll the heavy stone in front of the entrance. There was no time to properly prepare his body. How could they then rest in the Lord on the Sabbath, especially when they did not know who might next face persecution?

The Sabbath officially ends as the sun rises the next day. That’s where our remembrance begins, with the difficult task of washing the corpse of Jesus, preparing it for a proper burial – a job women have done for their loved ones since time immemorial. Here are the first witnesses, grieving followers – disciples in their own right – of Jesus... Listen.

Luke 24:1-11

¹ But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared.

(the women walk slowly, mournfully down the aisle, pretending to carry what they need to prepare the body)

² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in, they did not find the body.

(women are visibly upset as they get to the raised area – the tomb – and find it empty as they step up into it)

⁴ While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them.

(the 2 angels come in from the side and stand in front of the worship table. Note: women should be slightly to the left, angels to the right, facing each other)

⁵ The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground,

(women bow their heads toward the floor)

but the men said to them,

(one angel says)

“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. ⁶ Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.”

⁸ Then they remembered his words,

(Angels then leave as they came. A “lightbulb” seems to go off in the women’s heads, whose faces no longer are bowed to the floor, but are now lifted up)

⁹ and returning from the tomb,

(women come down the steps to the front of the sanctuary)

they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest.

(Robyn repeats what she said at the beginning of worship)

“The tomb is empty. Jesus is not there.

He is raised from the dead like he said he would be!”

¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

(Women walk to the back, then return to their seats. Angels also take off their robes and return to their seats)

Responsive Confession

#697

Leader: O Prince of peace,
from peace that is no peace,
from the grip of all that is evil,
from a violent righteousness...

People: deliver us.

Leader: from paralysis of will,
from lies and misnaming,
from terror of truth...

People: deliver us.

Leader: From hardness of heart,
from trading in slaughter,
from the worship of death...

People: deliver us.

Leader: By the folly of your gospel,
by your choosing our flesh,
by your nakedness and pain...

People: heal us.

Leader: By your weeping over the city,
by your refusal of the sword,
by your facing of horror...

People: heal us.

Leader: By your bursting from the tomb,
by your coming in judgment,
by your longing for peace ...

People: heal us.

All: Grant us peace. AMEN

Benediction

One: This is the day God gives us new life. Remember!

All: We will share good news with everyone we meet.

One: This is the day of Jesus' resurrection. Remember!

All: We will tell this story over and over.

One: Don't live in the past, however. Remember forward!

All: We will go to share peace & grace with the world.

May the Lord bless as you step into this Easter Journey,
providing all you truly require along the way.

Don't be afraid.

Just remember.

Christ is risen!

Amen