

Matthew 28:2-6 *And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."*

THE EMPTY GRAVE

The earth begins to rumble, tremble and shake. A fiery figure comes streaking across the sky, down to the garden -- a young man dressed in a brilliant, shining white robe. He advances to the grave as Roman soldiers cower in fright, spread-eagled on their faces, shaking.

Nor have those legionnaires misjudged the strength of this single shining soldier of the heavenly host. With a flick of the wrist he sends the great rock rolling from its slot at the mouth of the tomb, toppling to the ground some distance away. The angel then calmly walks to the stone and seats himself on it, plainly unimpressed by the wax remains of the imperial seal of Tiberius Augustus Caesar.

The grave in the garden was revealed to be empty when the angel rolled the stone from its mouth. It had been empty ever since, in the darkness before dawn, the soul of Jesus re-entered His undecayed body -- and the limbs stirred, the heart again began beating. His body was restored to life, glorified. Jesus then left the sepulcher. The great stone could not prevent it -- and was left to guard His now unneeded grave clothes.

The resurrection from the dead -- that's what we celebrate this season. Jesus physically returned to life from the dead. That's what the angel told the women. That's what the apostles' finally believed and taught and died confessing. That's why the original Greek of the creed named for them says, "I believe in the resurrection of the flesh."

It was the physical body of Jesus the crucified Christ that returned to life from death on the first Easter morning.

HALLELUJAH! AMEN!

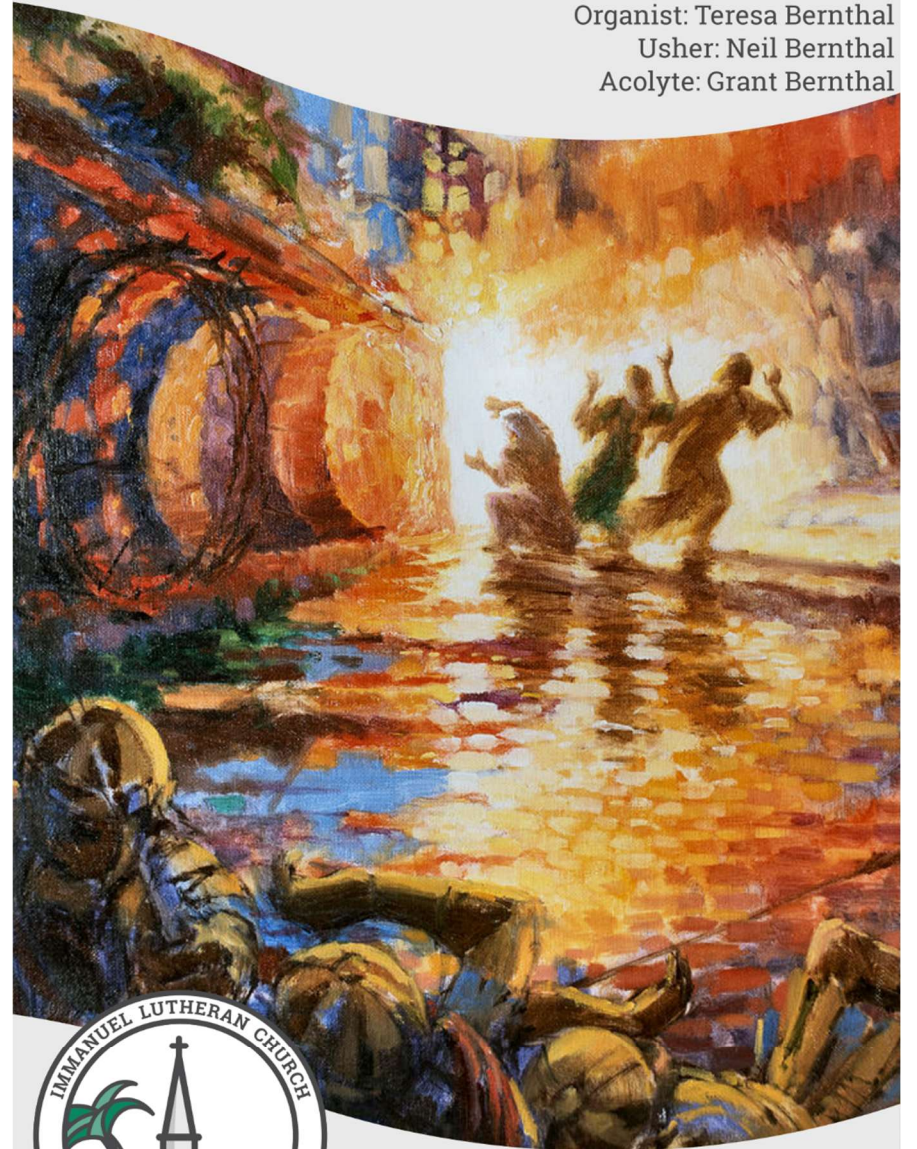
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Easter

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✠ Order of Service ✠



First Lesson

At the Empty Tomb

Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.

Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. Very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they said among themselves, "Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?"

But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away; for it was very large. Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

Then they (the other women) went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you. He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.'" And they remembered His words. So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.

Solo

"Christ is Arisen"

Hymn: TLH #736

"At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing"

Easter Meditation – Matthew 28:5-7 The angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 "He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7 "And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead."

Good Advice from the Easter Angel

I. "Don't be afraid."

II. "Look at the evidence."

III. "Go forth with the message."

Response: TLH #189

"He is Arisen! Glorious Word!"

P Christ is arisen!

C **♪ He is arisen! Glorious Word! Now reconciled is God, my Lord; The gates of heav'n are open. My Jesus did triumphant die, And Satan's arrows broken lie, Destroyed hell's direst weapon. Oh, hear What cheer! Christ victorious Riseth glorious, Life He giveth— He was dead, but see, He liveth!**

- OFFERING OF THANKFUL HEARTS -

Followed immediately by the Offering Hymn printed below:

OFFERING HYMN: TLH #568:1

"We Praise Thee, O God"

C **♪ We praise Thee, O God, our Redeemer, Creator, In grateful devotion our tribute we bring; We lay it before Thee, We kneel and adore Thee, We bless Thy holy name, glad praises we sing.**

EASTER PRAYER and LORD'S PRAYER

The Benediction:

Numbers 6:24-26

P The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you His peace.

C Amen!

Closing Hymn: WS #732 "Now All the Vault of Heaven Resounds"

I believe that on the third day Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead, as the prophets foretold and as He himself promised. Proved by the inspired Scriptures and by many eyewitnesses, Jesus' resurrection shows that He is God's Son, that His mission of salvation is complete, and that He has triumphed over death, our last great enemy.

With this victory, Christ has become our forerunner, the first-fruits of all who sleep in Him. Because He rose, I and all who trust in His redeeming work shall rise to eternal glory on the Last Day. Because He lives, I too shall live. For He has promised me: "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." Amen.

Hymn: TLH #201:1,4,5 "Jesus Lives! The Victory's Won"

Fourth Lesson

Behind Closed Doors

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."



When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence. He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still

with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be to you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

P In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

P He is risen!

C He is risen indeed!

Resurrection Proclamation

1 Corinthians 15; John 20

P Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. ... But if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty

C and our faith is also empty.

P For if the dead do not rise,

C then Christ is not risen.

P And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile;

C We are still in our sins!

P But now Christ is risen from the dead,

C and has become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

P For as in Adam all die,

C even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

P Peace to you! Receive the Holy Spirit. Your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed.

C Glory be to You, My Lord and My God!

P He is risen!

C He is risen indeed!



Hymn: TLH #199

"Jesus Christ is Risen Today, Alleluia!"

Second Lesson

In the Garden

Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying

there, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise



again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again to their own homes. But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw

Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away."

Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her.

Hymn: WS #730

"Now Let the Heav'ns Be Joyful"

Third Lesson

On the Road to Emmaus

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.

He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" "What things?" He asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet,

powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"



They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Confession of Faith

Easter Creed

I believe in Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, Lord of lords and Savior of the fallen world. I believe that He is the Word made flesh, Who came to earth to redeem all sinners. He was born under the Law, to fulfill all of God's commandments on my behalf. He was crucified at the hands of sinful men, and endured all the punishment that I and all sinners deserved, to fully satisfy the justice of God. He died and was buried.