

Interactive lesson



picture from <https://www.amazon.com/Leowefowa-Christmas-Photography-Background-Sanctuary/dp/B07X7TTV8H>



picture from <https://www.chowhound.com/food-news/197737/easter-basket-history-and-origins/>

"So we proclaim and so you have come to believe."
How then do we get from this tomb to this basket?

<Let them respond>

Do you know what the modern Easter symbols represent?

<Let them respond>

Candy - celebration/party

Bunnies - life out of hole in ground (tomb)

Chicks - new life from eggs

Lamb - Jesus as Paschal lamb

Egg - tomb; colored for celebration, glory new life

Butterfly - Jesus/transformed life (chrysalis tomb)

New outfits/bonnets - new life in celebration

Soft pretzels - Lenten prayer

Hot cross buns (Good Friday) - cross, spices:burial

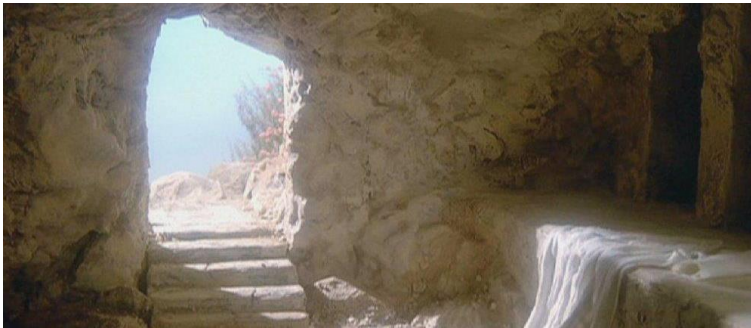
Lilies - traditionally, sprang up where Christ's
sweat/blood fell to ground during Passion

Dogwood - traditionally, wood of cross; cursed small,
blessed Easter blossoms in shape of cross with crown
of thorns in middle and nail dents on each petal.

May you be blessed to see Christ in all things as you celebrate Easter - this year and always!

Gospel lesson

In the last Gospel reading, we left off with Jesus laid dead in the tomb and the darkest of Sabbaths observed for His followers.



picture from <https://www.facebook.com/Bishop-Thomas-Gumbleton-125434794140814/photos/581993121818310>

John 20:1-18

(NRSV)

¹ Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.

² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."

³ Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb.

⁴ The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

⁵ He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in.

⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there,

⁷ and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself.

⁸ Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed;

⁹ for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb;

¹² and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet.

¹³ They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."

¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

¹⁵ Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried

him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher).

¹⁷ Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

The word of God for the people of God

<Hymn "Christ Is Risen" UMH #307>

Message: Terror & Amazement



picture from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/living-the-resurrection/easter-sunday-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/easter-sunday-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Wondrous Lord who inspires terror and amazement,
please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

that we may live in the joy of new life through your resurrection. Amen.



Living the Resurrection

- ♥ April 4 – Terror & Amazement
- ♥ April 11 – Unless I See
- ♥ April 18 – Touch and See
- ♥ April 25 – Listen to My Voice
- ♥ May 2 – Abide in Me
- ♥ May 9 – No Greater Love
- ♥ May 16 – We Are Yours



Easter is a time of new beginnings, so we now begin the sermon series, “Living the Resurrection.” The summary for today, “Terror & Amazement,” is:

“Let there be joy... Tell jokes, funny stories; let there be laughter. Easter is a day to feel, even more than to understand. It is a day to accept more than a day to explain. Even though our foundations have been shaken, we move forward, because that is where the Risen one is going. He is going ahead of you. Let’s keep moving forward.”

Happy Easter!



picture from personal photos

Wow, that feels so much more real this year than last! Last year, fumbling with Zoom, all of our events just having been canceled, and everyone in quarantine, it felt more like we were still on the trial side of the tomb. Forlorn balloons tied to water bottles that got quickly blown askew do not compare well with blooming garden flowers.

But that's kind of the point of Easter: what we try to make of things based solely on human understanding cannot compare well with what God puts in place. We do not even come close. Instead, we are apt to respond with terror while we do not understand, and be overcome with amazement at what God does when we finally do understand.



picture screencaptured from
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rxyG8mffLVE>

Mary came to tend to Jesus's dead body, but His body was not there. Devastated and terrified that things were not as expected, she ran to the disciples who had been closest to Jesus. They checked out her story, but did not have a clue of what to do about it either; they returned home, terrified the soldiers would come for them too.

They did not understand what had happened despite Jesus having explained it beforehand, because they were still seeing events through secular world values, not as God had laid them out. Even after His resurrection, it was not until Jesus connected with them that anyone understood.

Mary wept because the logical assumption was that Jesus's body had been stolen; she had no idea that Jesus was actively using it. God had put something in place that was beyond human understanding. Mary's mindset was completely flipped - sorrow and terror turned to delight and amazement - at the tomb when Jesus spoke to her.

Peter spoke in Acts about how God worked through Jesus: helping people oppressed by sin; getting crucified by those putting love of self above [love of God and love of others]; and coming back that the Word of God would be preached throughout the world.



picture screencaptured from
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThjhkevZ4Mw>

But on Easter, Peter was not able to celebrate the resurrection, to understand what had happened, until

after Jesus appeared to him again, until he had seen the resurrected Christ for himself.

Change is typically unsettling and can be hard to accept. On the scale that God works, it can be terrifying, challenging us to our very core, something we cannot wrap our brains around until it is drilled home for us – even when we know that what our Creator does is extremely good, amazing us.



*picture screencaptured from
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxmGFQYHiLI>*

Jesus kept coming back, for forty days before His final ascension, to a lot of different people. And even then, He still had to intervene on the road to Damascus with Saul a year or two later – another terror-filled experience with amazement to come. Saul-turned-Paul proclaimed that Good News, reminding the Corinthians of it in our epistle reading today.

God calls to each one of us, to rethink our priorities, to live as Jesus taught us. We are called to the terrifying unknown, to trust in the Spirit with us to lead us to the awesome, amazing life God intends for us.

God has patience and works through many people to get through to us. We are precious to our Creator, our Redeemer, our Sustainer. And today we celebrate that terrifying and amazing time when God made it clear that we are worth coming back for, no matter what the sin of which we need repent.

Jesus is risen from the dead, that we too may live.
Alleluia!

Now let us respond with

<Doxology>

<Prayer of Dedication and Pastoral Prayer>

Let us pray:

Mighty God of Resurrection power: We so desperately need the "Alleluia!" morning! We have lived with death for so long; we have been trapped in our tombs so long, we could not be more anxious to hear the report from Mary, "I have seen the Lord!"

We know in our hearts that you have been with us through all the past year has handed us, and we have seen you in the generosity of heart that has brought us through these days.

As we give back to you this day, may we do so as those convinced that light will always wash away darkness, and life will always defeat death!

Guide us with Your wisdom and help us with these concerns on our hearts today:

- Healing touch and comfort for all who are ailing.
 - Coronavirus victims - isolated; **school**; out-of-work; health care workers (especially: Marie Curri, Laura Davis, Nicole Marshall, Vince Marshall, Heidi Newton, Jennifer Tibbens-Scalzo) & those serving critical needs
 - **Elaine Perkins** - cardiac issues
 - **Gary Sweet** - radiation treatments starting 4/5/2021
 - **Lolita White** - cardiac issues
 - **Paul Lott** - spots on lungs
 - -
 - -
 - -
- Thanks for
 - -
 - -
- Hold those who cannot be with us in Your loving embrace until we see them again.
 - Travelers
 - Family far off
- Social unrest - dismantle racism and reform problem systems
- Guide our Leaders - local, state, federal, international, and especially of Your church.
- Help us to be fearless in talking about You as a normal part of daily living.
 - For the sake of this our local church, one part of Your great church, guide each one of us this week to invite one person to come know You better.

- Help us to encourage one another toward faith in You and toward living together in true Christian community.

All these things we pray in Your holy name, Amen.

<Communion>

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth.

- † You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life.
- † When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast.
- † You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and set before us the way of life.

<slide change>

And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ.

- † By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.
- † By your great mercy we have been born anew
 - to a living hope through the resurrection of your Son from the dead and
 - to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.
- † Once we were no people, but now we are your people, declaring your wonderful deeds in Christ, who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

When the Lord Jesus ascended, he promised to be with us always, in the power of your Word and Holy Spirit.

<hold hands out over bread/elements>

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said:

“Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.”

<hold hands out over juice/elements>

When the supper was over he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:

“Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

On the day you raised him from the dead he was recognized by his disciples in the breaking of the bread,
and in the power of your Holy Spirit your Church has continued in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup.

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,

<slide change>

we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving
as a holy and living sacrifice,
in union with Christ's offering for us,
as we proclaim the mystery of faith.
Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

<hold hands out over elements>

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on on these gifts of bread and juice.

Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever.

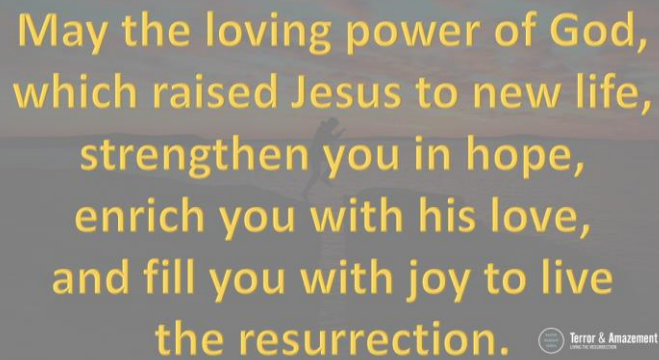
Amen.

<Lord's Prayer>

<Serving of the elements>

<Hymn "Christ the Lord is Risen Today" UMH #302>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jfNwvNhpKN4>

<Benediction>¹

May the loving power of God,
which raised Jesus to new life,
strengthen you in hope,
enrich you with his love,
and fill you with joy to live
the resurrection.

background from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/living-the-resurrection/easter-sunday-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/easter-sunday-year-b-graphics>

As we go forth today following the terror and amazement of discovering the empty tomb:
May the loving power of God,
which raised Jesus to new life,
strengthen you in hope,
enrich you with his love,
and fill you with joy
to live the resurrection.

¹ Modified from words posted on the Third Space website. <http://third-space.org.uk/blog>, reposted: <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2013/02/easter-benediction.html>.