

**New Castle United Methodist Church  
510 Delaware Street  
New Castle, DE 19720**

**The Message for April 4, 2021  
Easter Sunday  
“The Empty Tomb”**

The tomb was empty!

Did you ever think that as Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James, made their way to the tomb early in the morning, that they might have seen, or perhaps walked right by the empty cross? The place where Jesus was buried was not far from where he died; so, it was perhaps right by the cross that the Mary's had to walk to get to the tomb. They may have tried hard not to look at the cross or even the place where the cross had stood, but it would have been almost impossible for them to not see it. The empty post that held the cross beam in place was still standing.

At the top of the post, they may have seen the dried blood and water that had flowed from his spear-pierced side. Perhaps the crown of thorns still laid in the dirt along with the nails that had held him to the cross. The entire length of the post must have been smeared with the blood from Jesus' back, which had been torn to shreds as he was flogged and beaten before he was crucifixion.

Even the ground around the cross would have been stained with his blood, that first Easter morning. But now, the hill on which the cross had stood was all but empty, It was a clear reminder that Jesus really did die.

They wouldn't have taken Jesus off the cross if he wasn't dead. As they took him down, the soldiers knew he was dead, the bystanders knew he was dead, the religious leaders who wanted him to die knew he was dead, the disciples knew he was dead and Mary, his own mother, knew he was dead After all, she had held his lifeless body in her arms.

The empty cross reminds us that Jesus died, but it also reminds us that we are forgiven, because that's why Jesus died. It is through the death of Jesus that our sins are forgiven.

No one likes to talk about sin. None of us likes to admit that we are sinners but sin is real, sin is universal, and the consequences is death and separation from God. Just like Adam and Eve, we make our own decisions and follow our own desires. Sometimes we make poor decisions so must pay the price for our sinful nature Through Christ, God forgives us. But because loves us so much, he sent his only Son, Jesus, to take our sins onto himself and die in our place. We are forgiven not because of what we have done but because of what Jesus has done for us.

The first promise we see in the empty cross is that God forgives us – not because we have earned it and not because we deserve it. God forgives us simply because he loves us. The empty cross is the sign of God’s promise to forgive.

The second promise of Easter is the empty grave. When the women got to the tomb, the stone was rolled away and the tomb was empty. Jesus was gone! Now there are some who think the women went to the wrong tomb. Because of their grief, pain, and confusion they just went to the wrong place; after all it was early in the morning and the sun had not as yet made its appearance. Of course, the problem with that theory is that once word spread about the empty tomb, the disciples raced there to check it out and they would have gone to the right tomb. Someone would have made sure they went to the right place and if the disciples all somehow got it wrong, as news of Jesus spread, the Roman officials and religious leaders would have doubled checked to make sure. They wanted Jesus dead so they would have checked the tomb out for themselves, but since no one stepped forward to correct the disciples – we know that they all had the correct tomb, and the tomb was empty.

Some thought the tomb was empty because the Romans took Jesus’ body for safekeeping, but again if that were true, if the Romans or the religious leaders had taken the body, then as the story of Jesus’ resurrection spread, they would have produced the body to stop the story. There were still others that said the disciples took the body. Well, beside the fact that the tomb was sealed and guarded, why would the disciples steal the body and then be willing to die for something they knew to be a lie?

The disciples didn’t steal the body of Jesus, the Roman government didn’t steal the body, the Jewish leaders didn’t steal the body, and it was the right tomb the women went to early that morning which all means one thing – the tomb was empty and Jesus was alive.

The resurrection of Jesus tells us that death itself has been defeated and because Jesus is alive, we who believe in him will live also. In the book of Revelation, Jesus says this:

Do not be afraid, I am the First and the Last. I am the living One.  
I am alive for ever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and Hades.

The empty grave stands as the promise of eternal life for all of us. The empty grave is the lasting promise that death has lost its power. Death could not hold Jesus and the grave cannot hold those who trust in him. Yes, the wages of sin are death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ. The empty cross reminds us of God's promise to forgive; the empty tomb reminds us of God's gift of eternal life for all who trust in Jesus.

The third promise found in emptiness is perhaps the most powerful of all. It's the promise we find in the empty grave clothes. Look at John 20:6-7. When Jesus rose from the dead, the shroud or grave clothes that had held him remained in the tomb and all of them except the covering of his head were undisturbed. The empty grave clothes means that the body of Jesus was up and walking around. The resurrected Jesus was not a ghost, he was not a spirit; Jesus himself was alive and present with his friends. He was there to continue his relationship with them. Mary sees him, hears him, and touches him. In time, all the disciples will see him, hear him, walk with him, and eat with him once again. The empty grave clothes promise us that an ongoing relationship with Jesus is possible.

It's not just the knowledge of forgiveness or the hope of eternal life which we celebrate, but we also celebrate the truth that Jesus is alive, here and now, and calls us into a deeper personal relationship with him. One of the promises of Easter is the promise of a relationship with God through the death of his Son on the cross. It's a free gift offered without reservation.

The best of life is experienced in our relationship with God; the promise of the empty grave is that, through Jesus, we can enter into that relationship. We can know God through Jesus. We can experience life in all its fullness, in all its purpose, in all its power when we are willing to walk with him and listen to and open our lives up to him. The empty grave promises that if we give our lives to God, God will enter into the fullness of life within us.

So, in the fullness of Easter, we see three powerful promises: the promise of forgiveness, the promise of eternal life and the promise of a personal relationship with God right here, *right now*. An empty cross tells us that Jesus *did die* and because of his death, we are forgiven. An empty tomb tells us that death has been defeated and we have the hope of eternal life, and the empty grave tell us that Jesus is alive and here with us today. Mark 16:7 tells us these words of Jesus as he spoke to Mary at the tomb, early that first Easter morning:

“Go, tell my disciples and Peter, say that I am going ahead of you into Galilee.  
There they will see me, just as I told you.”

He is risen and because He lives you will live also. Matthew 28:1-20 tells us this: about 40 days later, the 11 disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. Then Jesus appeared to them once again and said:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.  
Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations,  
baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.  
And know this, surely, I am with you always, even to the very end of the age.”

It's quite a story, but the best part is that it happened just as the writers of the Gospels said. People ask me, “Do you really believe this story of the resurrection the story of Jesus?” And my answer is always the same:

I not only believe it, I counting on it.

And I hope you are counting on it too.

Happy Easter.

*Pastor Ray Eck*



## Music for Easter

-- Bill Mathews, Director of Music Ministries

Written by Charles Wesley in 1739, the first year of his conversion, this joyful hymn is right at the top in popularity with his *Hark! the Herald Angels Sing*. The “Alleluia” refrains were added much later by editors and are thought to be a reminder of an ancient Easter greeting. But one of the most powerful features of the text is that it is written in the present tense: “Christ the Lord IS risen today!” In an article written for the UMC Discipleship Ministries, Peyton Stouth writes, “...it places us in community with those who witnessed the resurrection in their own lifetimes, and reaffirms our own hope of being set free from death.” Alleluia!

- **Christ the Lord is Risen Today, First-Plymouth Church, Lincoln, Nebraska**

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=SUrtBPkcOZY>

### Verse 1

Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!  
 Earth and heaven in chorus say, Alleluia!  
 Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!  
 Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia!

### Verse 3

Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia!  
 Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!  
 Once he died our souls to save, Alleluia!  
 Where's thy victory, O grave? Alleluia!

### Verse 2

Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!  
 Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!  
 Death in vain forbids him rise, Alleluia!  
 Christ has opened paradise, Alleluia!

### Verse 4

Soar we now where Christ has led, Alleluia!  
 Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!  
 Made like him, like him we rise, Alleluia!  
 Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!

...UMC Hymnal, no. 302

## Some thoughts about Handel and the “Hallelujah Chorus”...

On composing the “Hallelujah Chorus” Handel is said to have remarked,

“Whether I was in my body or out of my body as I wrote it, I know not. God knows.”

Why do we stand for the “Hallelujah Chorus”? When the choir began singing it during the first performance in London, King George II reportedly stood; the audience joined him, of course, and they all remained standing until the final “Hallelujah!” The tradition continues to this day.

At a time when illiteracy was widespread and written copies of the Bible were expensive and rare, Handel designed the “oratorio” to teach the scriptures by setting them to music. He wanted to take the message of the scriptures to the streets and specifically with the intent that they would be heard in secular theaters. The church was outraged and protested, but Handel persisted, even though doing this also meant little or no profit from his endeavors.

Earnings from many of the early performances were used to benefit hospitals, and assist the poor, the needy, orphaned children, the widowed, and the sick.

- **Hallelujah Chorus, from “Messiah,” words and music by George F. Handel**

Academy of Ancient Music at the Chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge, England

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ga9Pj4wr18g>



**“ZOOM” Worship**  
**April 11 @ 11am**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85010951342?pwd=NldWQnlQUmRBQ0hRbWdERVN3VitLdz09>

For those using a regular phone... the number for our Zoom Worship is (301) 715-8592. Remember... the phone number is long-distance and you should be sure your phone plan covers it.

**Meeting ID: 850 1095 1342**

**Passcode: 12345. On a computer, then hit “Enter.” On a phone, then hit “#”.**



**We plan to reopen  
for in-person worship services  
beginning on Sunday, April 18.**

- The wearing of a mask and social distancing will be required and temperatures will be taken.
- Families may sit together.
- You will be seated and dismissed by an usher.
- Until then, we will continue to meet via Zoom.

*We hope to see everyone  
who feels comfortable in attending  
at 10am on April 18<sup>th</sup>.*



### ✓ **Food Closet Needs**

- ✓ Canned entree's...Chili or Stew
- ✓ Unsweetened Dry Cereal... Cheerios, Corn Flakes
- ✓ Canned Fruit
- ✓ Canned Soup...Chunky or Progresso

*And remember, store brands are always acceptable.*



Joe Allione  
 Ruby Blackburn  
 Ken Bright  
 Cheryl Coffin, Michelle Jordan's godmother  
 Michael Cushner, Lois Emerson's son-in-law  
 Linda Eck  
 Barbara Gordon  
 Bobby Gaultieri, 10 years old, and a friend of  
 Lois Emerson  
 Richard and Carol Hastings  
 Jerry and Sally Knotts  
 Tammy McAleese  
 Our custodians, Jerry and Peter Octavio,  
 and their family, on the passing of  
 Shirley Octavio

Ron Pochvatilla

Janet Stutzman

Helen Swartz

Margaret Weyl

Greyson, a 3-year-old boy diagnosed with neuroblastoma. He is improving, but still in need of prayer.

Those diagnosed with the coronavirus and the families of those who have lost loved ones

The staff and the patients of our nursing homes

The homeless

Those who struggle with addiction

If you have someone that you'd like included on our Prayer List, please let us know by contacting either Doris Poultney, Prayer Chain Coordinator, @ 302-378-1184, or Pastor Ray @ 302-740-3932 or [snowman3girls@gmail.com](mailto:snowman3girls@gmail.com)



*New Castle  
United Methodist Church*  
"Zoom" Worship Service  
April 4, 2021 at 11am  
Easter Sunday  
**He is risen!**  
**He is risen indeed!**

*Order of Worship*

**The Greeting**

Pastor Ray Eck

Our time of Worship has come.  
It's Easter once again, the Hope of all Mankind.  
Let us praise God together.

**Introit:** *Christ the Lord is Risen Today*

Esther and Matthew Lovlie, Rick Schiller

**Verse 1**

Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!  
Earth and heaven in chorus say, Alleluia!  
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!  
Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia!

**Verse 2**

Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!  
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!  
Death in vain forbids him rise, Alleluia!  
Christ has opened paradise, Alleluia!

**Verse 3, sung by the soloists**

Lives again our glorious King, Alleluia!  
Where, O death, is now thy sting? Alleluia!  
Once he died our souls to save, Alleluia!  
Where's thy victory, O grave? Alleluia!

**Verse 4**

Soar we now where Christ has led, Alleluia!  
Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!  
Made like him, like him we rise, Alleluia!  
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!

...UMC Hymnal, no. 302

**Call to Worship**

Pastor Ray and Curt Kimmel, Liturgist

Pastor: Christ has Risen!

**Liturgist: Christ has risen indeed! Alleluia!**

Pastor: Jesus said, "I am the resurrection, and I am life.

**Liturgist: Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die."**

- ...our service continues on the next page



**Opening Prayer**

Curt Kimmel

Almighty God, through your only Son, you overcame death and opened to us the gate to everlasting life. Grant that we, who celebrate our Lord's resurrection, will also arise to a life of righteousness through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. What a wonderful day, knowing we have a Resurrected Savior who loves us so. Thanks be to God for the most wonderful gift of all. Amen.

**A TIME OF SHARING**

*Please "unmute" your device as we enter our time of prayer.*

**Our Joys and Concerns**

Pastor Ray

**Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer**

*Please place your device back on "mute after the Lord's Prayer."*

**Today's Scripture Reading:** Acts 10:34-43

Curt Kimmel

**The Gospel Reading:** John 20:1-18

Liturgist: This is the Word of God for the people of God.

**People: Thanks be to God, Amen!**

**Special Music:** *Alleluia, Alleluia*

Esther and Matthew Lovlie, Rick Schiller  
words and music by Donald Fishel

**The Message:** "The Empty Tomb"

Pastor Ray

**HOLY COMMUNION**

On the night in which he gave himself for us, he took the bread, gave thanks to God the Father, broke the bread and gave it to his disciples and said:  
"Take eat, this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

**Closing Hymn:** *Crown Him with Many Crowns*

Esther and Matthew Lovlie, Rick Schiller

**Verse 1**

Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb  
upon his throne,  
Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns  
all music but its own.  
Awake, my soul, and sing of him who died  
for thee, and hail him as thy matchless  
King through all eternity.

**Verse 2**

Crown him the Lord of life,  
who triumphed o'er the grave, and  
rose victorious in the strife for those  
he came to save.  
His glories now we sing, who died, and  
rose on high, who died, eternal life to  
bring, and lives that death may die.

- ...the hymn continues on the next page

**Verse 3, sung by the soloists**

Crown him the Lord of peace, whose  
power a scepter sways from pole to  
pole, that wars may cease, and all be  
prayer and praise.

His reign shall know no end, and round  
his pierced feet fair flowers of  
paradise extend their fragrance  
ever sweet.

**Verse 4**

Crown him the Lord of love; behold  
his hands and side, those wounds,  
yet visible above, in beauty  
glorified.

All hail, Redeemer, hail! For thou hast  
died for me; thy praise and glory  
shall not fail throughout eternity.

...UMC Hymnal, no. 327

**Benediction:**

Pastor Ray

And now, may the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. May God give you His peace in your going out and in your coming in, in your lying down and in your rising up, in your labor and in your leisure, in your laughter and in your tears; until you come to stand before Jesus; in that day, in which there is no sunset and no dawning.

**Our Easter Hope**

*Jesus said, "I am the resurrection, and the life:  
he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."*

John 11:25

