

Worship Service from First Presbyterian Church of Magnolia
Easter Sunday, March 27th, 2016

PRELUDE

“Jesus Is Alive”

The Children’s Choir

After the Prelude, the liturgist should step to the lectern and say,

“Would you join me in reading the responsive call to worship adapted from Isaiah 25 and printed in our bulletins?”

CALL TO WORSHIP

(adapted from Isaiah 25)

O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt You!

I will praise Your name; for You have done wonderful things!

You have destroyed the shroud that had been cast over all people.

You have swallowed up death forever.

You will wipe away the tears from all faces,

And remove the disgrace of Your people from all the earth

We have waited for the Lord, our God, so that He might save us.

Let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation.

Let us worship God beginning with prayer...

PRAYER OF INVOCATION

Let us pray... O Christ, whom death could not conquer, nor the tomb imprison; as you have shared our mortal frailty in the flesh, help us to share your immortal triumph in the spirit. Speak your Living word to us this Resurrection Day that we may live daily in its powerful embrace. Let no shadow of the grave frighten us and no fear of darkness turn our hearts from you. Reveal yourself to us as the first and the last, the Living One, our immortal Savior and Lord. Amen.

Would all of you who are able please stand with me and join in singing our opening hymn, “Jesus Christ Is Risen Today”, hymn number 123 in our Hymnals..

The liturgist should step back from the microphone for the hymn.

***HYMN OF PRAISE**

“Jesus Christ Is Risen Today”

The Hymnal #123

After the hymn, the preacher will step into the pulpit and say...

***CALL TO CONFESSION**

All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Having failed to live as we should, Christ now gives us a second chance. We are invited to come, confess our sins, receive his forgiveness and be made whole once more. Let us pray together the prayer of confession as it is printed in our bulletins. Let us pray...

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Merciful God, at Easter we are confronted by the miraculous announcement of your resurrection, an event for which we have no easy explanation. We must confess our reluctance to push back the boundaries of our own limited experience to make room for the unexplainable. We admit that our foolish pride leads us to presume to know what is "possible" and what is not. Nevertheless, we acknowledge our struggle to grasp by reason your unreasonable act of love in Christ's dying and rising. Forgive us we pray for allowing our limited reason to limit our loving, when you have stopped at nothing to reveal the magnitude of your love for us. Transform us by the power of your resurrection so that our faith in undreamed of possibilities may be born anew. Amen.

***SILENT CONFESSION** *(Pause for about 30 seconds of silence.)*

***THE ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

"Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures ... he was buried, and ... raised on the third day", becoming the victor over the power of sin and death. And we who believe are victorious with him. Friends believe the Good News!

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!

***GLORIA PATRI**

The Hymnal #579

***Glory be to the Father, & to the Son, & to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be,
World without end. Amen, Amen.***

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**

Having been reconciled to the Father through the grace of His Son, let us also be reconciled to one another and share Christ's peace. The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

Share the peace of Christ with others as you will.

After a few moments, liturgist will step into the lectern and say...

"At this time I want to invite all of our younger friends to come forward for a Word from the Lord brought to them by Ms. Karen."

The liturgist will take a seat until after the handbells have played.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

(All Singing)

***Jesus friend so kind and gentle, little ones we bring to thee;
Grant to them thy dearest blessing. Let thine arms around them be;
Now enfold them in thy goodness, from all danger keep them free.***

SPECIAL MUSIC

"Come Thou, Almighty King"

The Handbell Choir

As the bell choir resumes their seats, the liturgist will step to the lectern and say:

THE INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

When we encounter the risen Christ, and then hear and believe his good news, our gratitude pours forth in eagerness to share good news with the world. So let us now demonstrate our love and gratitude to God, as we continue our worship with the presentation of our tithes and offerings....

The liturgist will sit down until the Doxology begins to play.

THE OFFERTORY

Dr. Elizabeth Davis

"That Easter Day with Joy Was Bright"- Harris/Leatherman

***DOXOLOGY (In Unison)**

The Hymnal #592

***Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below;
Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.***

After the Doxology, the liturgist will return to the lectern and say...

***OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Let us pray... Saving God, we make this Easter offering as a means of rolling away the stones of hunger, poverty, despair, and injustice in this world, that those held captive in such tombs may be released, and may rejoice in your power to the glory of the risen Christ. Amen.

***THE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

(from 1 Cor 15:1-11)

Let us remain standing and reaffirm our Christian faith using verses one through eleven from the fifteenth chapter of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians which have been printed in our bulletins. Let us say what we believe...

This is the Good News which we have received, in which we stand, and through which we are being saved-- if we hold firmly to the message that has been proclaimed to us: That Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to Paul. By the grace of God we are what we are, and his grace toward us has not been in vain. So we proclaim and so we have come to believe.

Invite the congregation to... "Be seated," and then say...

This morning we have our final Skit Guys video, this time with Salome telling the story of that first Easter morning.

ENCOUNTERS WITH CHRIST

"Salome"

Video

ANTHEM

"The Festal Day Is Here" - Hal Hopson

The Choir

After the choir finishes, the Liturgist will return to the lectern & say....

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Our first lesson for this morning is taken from the fifteenth chapter of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, beginning with the twelfth verse. You are encouraged to follow along and you can find the passage on page #1001 in your pew bibles.

Listen now for the word of God...

Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.

For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied.

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

The liturgist will return to his seat on the chancel or with family or friends in the congregation. Thanks so much for your help!

When the liturgist finishes, the preacher will step into the pulpit & say...

Our Sermon text for this morning is drawn from the Twenty-fourth Chapter of Luke’s Gospel, beginning at the first verse. You can find the passage on page 919 in your pew bibles. Listen once more for the Word of God. . . .

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them.

The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.”

Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest.

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

Leader: ...This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE SERMON

“The Announcement”

I have come to make an announcement. I know, that’s my job. But I really think that very few actually pay attention to the announcements we make on Sunday morning. The announcements about the church's life are published in the newsletter, and again in the weekly email, and printed yet again on the back of the worship bulletin. And then I get up here on Sunday, and read them to you as though you couldn't read.

We tried a few years back to reduce the number of announcements at the start of the service and we received some fairly quick feedback that it wasn’t a good idea. So I do read them and then somebody at the door will ask, "Where is Cook’s Night Out this week?"

So, I will make the announcement.

This morning, a little while before daybreak, God raised from the dead Jesus of Nazareth.

That's really my whole assignment, to make the announcement.

I know it's difficult to hear.

Jesus warned his disciples that when you go out to sow the seed, which is the word of God, be ready for it. Some of the seed will fall on the path where the repeated passage of people, back and forth and back and forth, will harden the path like concrete. The seed falls on the path and the sparrow from the rooftop and the chicken from the barn peck, peck, peck and they're gone. Nobody received it.

It's never been easy to hear this announcement. You heard the Gospel lesson. The women were scared half to death and ran from the tomb when they got the announcement.

So, who can hear this announcement? Apparently not the disciples, because the women's story seemed like a fairy tale, and they were much too smart to believe such wild stories.

It's not easy. And John writes that Thomas said, "I won't believe it, not until I touch his side, not until I touch his hands, not until I touch his feet. I will not believe it."

It's never been easy to hear this announcement. But I want you to know that I'm not going to make it easy for you. I'm not going to trivialize it by speaking of eggs and lilies and rabbits and things.

There's a cross in this resurrection here. I'm not just going to fill the air with good cheer and let Easter evaporate into a vague cloud of good feelings. I can't do that. My job is simply to make the announcement. And the announcement is this: Sometime this morning before first light, God raised Jesus of Nazareth from the dead.

I can't shrink it by giving you explanations as to what resurrection means or some scientific parallels that will help you to believe. I will tell you that for a lot of people it is very, very important.

It meant a lot to Paul in strange ways. I don't know if this man was sick most of his life or had gotten some kind of sickness in his ministry, but he was a man in pain. He said, "I groaned in the body. Just when my spirit is getting richer and fuller and finer and more alive, my body is going down and down and down and my spirit going up and my body going down and all I can do when I lie down at night is groan. When am I going to have the redemption in my body?"

And then he heard the announcement and he said, "Death is swallowed up in victory. Death is dead and all her daughters are dead. Cynicism, criticism, fear, despair, discouragement, they're all dead." For Paul, too, dipped into the text you heard earlier from Isaiah 25. "Death has been swallowed up forever."

But, you will have to make of the announcement what you will. I can't tell you what you should do or how you should react. I'm just supposed to make the announcement. I can personally witness to you that the supreme importance of the announcement to me is not just for the resurrection from the dead but the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from the dead.

Who was raised from the dead? Jesus of Nazareth.

Not King Herod who tried to kill the baby before he was even weaned.

Not Pontius Pilate who as the governor screamed in the face of Jesus and said, "Don't you know I have the power to kill you in this minute?"

Not Tiberius Caesar who sat like a marble statue in Rome and said, "I have nothing really to do with peasants, especially Jewish peasants. What was his name again? Jesus? Never heard of him."

Who was raised from the dead? **Jesus of Nazareth.**

Do you know what that means? It means that God lifted up this person and said, "This is the one I've vindicated. This is the one I affirm. This is the one I exonerate. This is the one that tells you what I had in mind when I created you humans in my own image.

You could walk among the people of his land and say, 'Can anybody here raise a hand if Jesus ever spoke ill of you? Laid hands against you? Lied to you. Can anyone? No, not one!

Do you see how it's important that it was Jesus of Nazareth God raised from the dead and said, "Now this is what I have in mind for the world"?

In fact in every church I've visited there are a few who do give of their whole selves sacrificially.

There was a woman who would fast for a day each week so she could put an extra \$10 in the plate for missions.

I've seen others hobble in to church on Sunday mornings, when the pain of walking was almost more than they could bear, but they just wouldn't miss an opportunity to worship.

Then there are those who heard this announcement before, and they gave their life to Christ. Maybe they even thought about going to seminary, or considered going on a mission trip, or a spiritual retreat, but then something happened. Maybe the memory of what they had heard faded, or other voices crowded it out of their consciousness with shouted announcements that diverted their attention. They heard the seductive music, saw the glitz and the glamour, smelled the things that made their mouth water, and they traded their birthright for a bowl of stew. Now time has fogged the memory of that glorious Good News that they heard announced, and they need to hear it again.

I want everybody who's traded it off to know that God has vindicated Jesus of Nazareth. Look at him-- nonviolent, turn the other cheek, love your enemies. "How often must I forgive, Jesus? Seven times?" "No, no, no, seventy times seven." I want you to understand this is the life that God has raised from the dead and said, "Look, this is what I had in mind."

I know the experience; you know the experience-- volunteering to be a chair of a committee or a sponsor for the youth group, or a few other jobs like that that raise your level of commitment to a level you never thought possible. Then you get in the boat all excited and start pulling at your oars. You look around and everybody else's oars are in the boat; they're not pulling. You're the only one tugging at the oars. Who needs this? Well, this is the kind of stuff Jesus had to put up with. But God has raised him from the dead. Do you know what that means?

Carl Sandburg once wrote: "So take up your cross and walk the thorn way. And if a sponge of vinegar be handed to you on a spear, take that too. The soul is woven of endurance. God knows."

Mr. Sandburg wrote that after hearing the announcement.

You don't have to be in a hurry to make this something important in your life. Easter lasts fifty days, you remember? We think of today as Easter Sunday. But Easter, according to the church, lasts fifty days. Officially, Easter ends May 8 so don't be in a hurry. Take the afternoon, take the evening, take next week. You have fifty days. For some people it takes longer. And if that is not enough, remember that every Sunday, is a little Easter all its own. You can hear the announcements on any given Sunday.

Adela Rogers St. Johns was probably the most important newspaperwoman of the last century. She covered everything: the Lindbergh baby kidnapping trial, heavy weight boxing matches, presidential elections, visits of kings, she covered it all.

When she was 75 years old she visited Hollywood and met a cowboy actor named Tom Mix. Some of you are old enough to remember Tom Mix; he was one of the good ones. Weren't any women in his movies; he just kissed his horse and rode away. Tom Mix from Pennsylvania by way of Dewey, Oklahoma. He was a real cowboy and went to Hollywood and started making westerns. She didn't know who he really was until she met him at a party. She heard him recite Shakespeare. He was an amateur, but supremely skilled Shakespearean scholar and had memorized lengthy passages of Shakespeare and other poets, ancient and modern. She wrote, "I have never heard from the public stage anyone who moved me like Tom Mix."

Some time later she was talking to Tom Mix and they got to discussing religion. Ms. St. John said, "I didn't really have anything to do with religion. 'Do you believe in God?' he asked."

"Well I don't know, probably not," she shrugged her shoulders.

And Tom Mix looked at her and recited two lines from an Ezra Pound poem. "I have seen him eat from the honeycomb since they hanged him on the tree."

When she wrote her memoirs she gave this title to the book: *The Honeycomb*. She was 75 when she heard the announcement; took her a long time. Take your time.

My assignment is simply to announce to you that this morning sometime before sunrise, God

raised from among the dead, Jesus of Nazareth.

You have fifty days. In fact, I'm sure if you applied, you could get an extension.

PASTORAL PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, we greet you and bring you thanks and praise that the cross has not defeated you, and the grave has not kept you silent. At the first dew of the morning, the place of defeat has become the place of victory; in your humiliation we witness your greatest glory; and where life was lost we find hope and life eternal.

Bring, we pray, Easter to our hearts, eyes, and ears, to our lives, this morning. Grant that we may confidently and wholeheartedly believe in the Good News of Easter, and finally share in the joyful resurrection of the all the saints.

Then may we proclaim, "He is risen!" to a waiting world. May the resurrection taking place in us, keep us mindful of those to whom Easter has not yet come. For now the empty tomb is a reflection of their empty hearts and our alleluias fall on ears deaf to joy. Grant them, O God, the assurance of your presence as they travel from the darkness of their own Good Fridays to the glory of Easter Sunday. Strengthen us to persevere in sharing the news of his rising from the dead, that out of death comes life, that out of darkness comes light, and that out of despair, hope. Long after the lilies have bloomed and the alleluias have faded away, grant us the grace to remember this day and your promise of new life, so that we might answer each crucifying doubt, fear and pain with the cry of the faithful: "He is risen, indeed."

We pray in the name of the risen Lord who taught us to pray saying ..

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done; On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Let us who are able stand as we all join in singing our closing hymn, "Thine Is the Glory", #122 in our *Hymnals*.

*HYMN OF DEDICATION

"Thine Is the Glory"

The Hymnal #122

*THE BENEDICTION

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, remain with you always. Amen

*CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE "Alleluia, Alleluia! Give Thanks"

Alleluia, Alleluia! Give thanks to the risen Lord.

Alleluia, Alleluia! Give praise to His Name.

*POSTLUDE

Dr. Elizabeth Davis