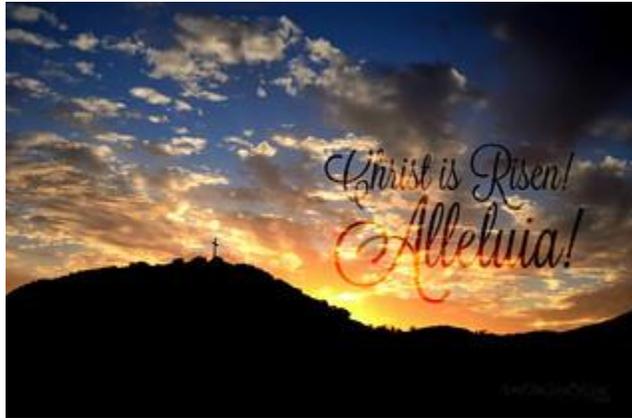


**WESTMINSTER CHURCH  
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA**

*Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario P6A 3B5*

*“Trusting God, nurturing disciples for Christ,  
being empowered by the Holy Spirit”*



**April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

**Easter Sunday**

**“He is risen. He is not here!”**

**...We Gather to Worship God...**

**Prelude:**

**Call to Worship:**

We are not eye-witnesses to an event, as were Mary and the disciples; we have not journeyed through a dangerous city to seek answers or consolation; we have not seen an angel dressed in white seated in an empty tomb, asking us why we look for the living among the dead?

But we are here to attest to a story that has not lost its power during twenty centuries of change and conflict.

We are here because those before us carried this story as if it were precious gold; cherished it as if it were the key to the greatest treasure chest ever discovered.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, take your places here today in celebration and in awe. What you are about to hear again, has changed the world and needs to change it again. Your very presence attests to the rising up of life from the tomb of despair, and to the uncontrollable, uncontainable, undefeatable power of God.

It is Easter morning again: and we will proclaim: He is risen! He is risen indeed!

Opening Hymn 243 Jesus Christ is risen today

<https://youtu.be/rMwPEmUMP7U>

## **Welcome & Announcements**

### **Prayer of Adoration and Confession**

O God of all our days, we come this morning with longing, worry and anticipation. We seek to know you, to see you, to touch you. Open our hearts, that we might experience you anew. Open our lives, that we may be faithful witnesses to your resurrection. May we, with your help find ways to be joyful, to proclaim your steadfast, liberating love to those we can reach this day. Be with us this morning as we proclaim ‘Christ is Risen, He has risen indeed!’

For there are times, Lord, where we forget this truth. We wander through our day wondering where you have gone and why things are not going right. Be with us when we are asking ourselves questions instead of speaking to you. Hear our unspoken prayers as well as our spoken. And may we in the end always be able to say “I believe in the Resurrection”.

We pray this in Jesus Name, praying as you taught your disciples saying, Our Father who art in Heaven...Amen.

**Solo:** Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord.

Marla Pritchard

### **...We Listen to God’s Word...**

#### **Word of God:**

**Readings:** Acts 10:34-43  
I Corinthians 15:1-1  
Mark 16:1-8

**Hymn: 252 He is Lord** <https://youtu.be/CqFEXLeXZY0>

**Prayer for Understanding: Lord Jesus, unstop our ears that we may hear, lift the scales from our eyes that we may see, but above all else break the hard shell from around our hearts, that we may see and believe, hear and be moved, and feel and be transformed. In Jesus name we pray. Amen**

**Message:**

True to our times and true to the true purpose of Facebook, there is a meme that went around this week that deserves recognition. It's picture of tomb with the huge stone rolled back and the caption underneath: Lockdown never really worked around Easter! I like it. He is risen! He is risen indeed! He is risen. Hallelujah!!!!

Those three words..He is risen. Are so profoundly powerful on any day, but especially today. He is risen! Hallelujah!

Today we are invited literally on a journey from brokenness at the beginning to wonder and awe and maybe a little fear. From early this morning as the women walk slowly to the tomb to embalm a dead body to the wonderful words of an angel...he is risen. He is not here...why do you look for the living among the dead?

You know it's a good thing that God makes young hearts strong enough to handle great shocks, cause this was a huge shock to those first women witnesses. In Mark's gospel you can feel the despair and sadness in the women as they go to embalm Jesus. You can sense what we know deep grief brings ...that almost robotic movement of one foot in front of the other (and the numbed hope to just make it through the day) that gets us through the burial process....they keep repeating to each other over and over again...who will roll the stone back for us? They go out without having any idea whose going to roll back the stone, another sign of the depth of their grief filled confusion.

And then everything is wrong...the stone is rolled away...how, who, why?...who moved the stone on the sabbath?...and they walk in and there is an angel dressed all in white sitting on the place where they fully expected the silent broken body of Jesus. We know it's an angel because his first words have to be "fear not"..but then his words continue.... "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter. He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you."

In everyday speech, we tend to use words like “wonderful” and “awesome” quite a bit. “That cake was wonderful.” “I got out of work early today and had an awesome afternoon.” “What a wonderful service.” Usually we just mean something was very nice, or very convenient, or was pleasing to the senses. But I want you to think about the word “wonderful,” for a second. It means “to be filled with wonder.” When was the last time you were filled with wonder or awe? When was the last time you were overwhelmed by power, or mystery, or even maybe fear?

I have had a few, but many of you will remember the birth of your first child (it was a wonderful experience (truly wonderfilled experience) to be present at the birth of all of my sons..unique and precious each one), but the birth of Andrew was a moment of wonder I will never forget. That moment stands in my mind as a truly unique moment of wonder, awe and yes, some terror. My life had changed, it would never be the same again. But I like you, had an idea what was about to happen.

Those poor women had no idea what was going to happen that morning. And it is at this moment that these women were completely filled with wonder and fear. But the story doesn't end there, the angel gives them a command, a challenge: go and tell the disciples, and especially Peter, that the Lord is risen! Peter is expressly named (and I love this...this is so important) because only hours ago, he had repeatedly denied Jesus after swearing he would never do so. As one ancient Greek commentator notes, he likely felt that in his shame, he was no longer a disciple, having betrayed the One he had sworn to love. But Jesus, even in his moment of resurrection triumph, continues to show us that his victory is built on mercy, forgiveness and renewal.

“Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.”

And so, with the end of verse 8, the earliest manuscripts of Mark's gospel abruptly end. Though there is much debate as to why, to me it fits with the rest of Mark's gospel. Who is Jesus? Who is the Christ. Mark's gospel began abruptly with the words “The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God”...and then remember that no one, human or demon, was allowed to say who he was until after his death and the curtain of the temple is torn in two and the voice of the centurion who had crucified him says...surely this was the Son of God”. And then here the women run from the tomb afraid to say anything to anyone, even after they are told to go and tell... we sit there with the text that ends and we say, No, it can't end this way, it can't end with the women saying nothing to anyone...And then if you note, the question has changed. The question is not Who was Jesus...it is

clearly now, Who is Jesus? Who is the Christ. And it leaves us to answer the question for ourselves. Who is Jesus, Who is Christ?

Tucked away in a central Parisian museum that was once a railway station, there hangs an Easter painting quite unlike any Gospel masterpiece created before or after it. It is not painted by a Michaelangelo, a Rembrandt or a Rubens . The painting is the work of a little-known Swiss painter named Eugène Burnand. For those who make a trip to see it, viewing the canvas is a special spiritual experience in their lives. The work does not show any opened tomb, hovering angel, it doesn't even show the risen Jesus. It merely portrays two witnesses running, Jesus' oldest and youngest apostle. It has an unimaginative title: "The Disciples Peter and John Running to the Sepulchre on the Morning of the Resurrection". But in looking at it you see the Apostle John clasps his hand in prayer while Peter holds his hand over his heart. The viewer feels the rush as their hair and cloaks fly back with the wind. They are sprinting towards their own discovery of the moment that has changed the world. This painting's scene is dynamic; we are in motion."

I believe the women's flight from the tomb is meant to draw us into the moment; to see and feel what the women were experiencing. And just like the women, we too are confronted with the reality of the empty tomb and are faced with the same choice: Will we, in our fear of a seemingly uncertain future, run away from the mystery and the promise of the resurrection? Or will we, in the faith that God will raise us up just as He raised Jesus, be faithful to his call and run towards the risen Christ? We know from the context of the other gospels that the women became the first preachers of the gospel, as they ran on to tell the disciples of the Risen Lord. Will we follow their lead, and embracing the wonder and awe of this moment, proclaim the Risen Lord to the ends of the earth?

**Collection & Dedication:** Generous and gracious God, we receive so much from you. What we return to you this day has first come to us from you. By your Spirit, multiply our gifts so that those who are in need may taste your abundance which we know already in Christ, our Living Lord. Amen.

**Let us present to God our tithes and offerings.**

**(At this time Session would like to thank the congregation for continuing to support Westminster Church in various ways. We thank you for your continued support through PAR, regular mail and etransfer to [office@westminsterchurch.ca](mailto:office@westminsterchurch.ca). Your ongoing support financially and in prayer is gratefully received.)**

## Service of Holy Communion

Hymn: 259 This joyful Eastertide <https://youtu.be/5tipsbcfuB4>

Apostle's Creed #539

Words of Invitation

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Sacrament of Holy Communion

Hymn: 258 Thine be the glory <https://youtu.be/UPH7-dNrwb8>

**Benediction:** Now as you go from here, may the Grace, Mercy and Peace of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

Organ Postlude

