

◆ MELROSE UNITED CHURCH ◆

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◆ Sunday April 12, 2020 ◆
Easter Communion Service

MELROSE UNITED CHURCH

* indicates a time to stand, if you are able
congregational responses are in **boldface type**

◆ GATHERING ◆

PRELUDE – This Joyful Eastertide

* OPENING HYMN – *Jesus Christ is Risen Today*

VU 155

*1 Jesus Christ is risen today, hallelujah!
our triumphant holy day, hallelujah!
who did once, upon the cross, hallelujah!
suffer to redeem our loss, hallelujah!*

*2 Hymns of praise then let us sing, hallelujah!
unto Christ, our heavenly King, hallelujah!
who endured the cross and grave, hallelujah!
sinners to redeem and save, hallelujah!*

*3 But the pains which he endured, hallelujah!
our salvation have procured, hallelujah!
now above the sky he's King, hallelujah!
where the angels ever sing, hallelujah!*

*4 Sing we to our God above, hallelujah!
praise eternal as God's love, hallelujah!
praise our God, ye heavenly host, hallelujah!
praise the Son and Holy Ghost, hallelujah!*

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE:

One: We are here on Easter morning celebrating our faith that
God raised Jesus from death to life. That was Jesus'
promise to us.

All: Hallelujah! Thanks be to God.

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Christ is risen!

All: He is risen, indeed!

One: The risen one came to the disciples on the Emmaus road
and turned their despair into hope.

**All: With joy in their hearts, they returned to Jerusalem with
the words: "Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed."**

OPENING PRAYER (together)

**Jesus, you are the Living Stone,
Chosen by God and precious.**

We desire to be like you,

Living stones, built into a spiritual house.

Let our time of worship open us to your presence

And transform us into a holy people in your

Name. Amen.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND WORK OF THE CHURCH

TIME WITH THE CHILDREN

* HYMN – *The Glory of the King*

VU 162

*1 The glory of our King was seen
when he came riding by,
and all the children waved and sang,
"Hosanna, King most high!"*

*2 The glory of our King was seen
when, with his arms stretched wide
to show his love to everyone,
Jesus was crucified.*

*3 The glory of our King was seen
on the first Easter day,
when Christ rose up, set free from death,
to love, to guide, to stay.*

Reader: Cheryl Evans

WISDOM OF ISRAEL: Jeremiah 31:1-6

At that time, says the LORD, I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. Thus says the LORD: The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness; when Israel sought for rest, the LORD appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you. Again I will build you, and you shall be built, O virgin Israel! Again you shall take your tambourines, and go forth in the dance of the merry-makers. Again you shall plant vineyards on the mountains of Samaria; the planters shall plant, and shall enjoy the fruit. For there shall be a day when sentinels will call in the hill country of Ephraim: "Come, let us go up to Zion, to the LORD our God."

One: This is the word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

THE GOSPEL: The Gospel of John 20:1-18

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. 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." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He

bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; 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. 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." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 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." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). 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.'" 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.

One: The Good New of our Lord Jesus Christ.

All: Praise be to you, O Christ.

REFLECTION: "Is It True?"

Is it true? Is it true that God lives and gives us life?

That is the powerful question on everyone's minds as you come into your own sacred space for this morning's worship. Some of you come fully believing in the resurrection on that Easter morning so long ago. And that belief has significantly and forever transformed your lives.

Some of you doubt, but you are yearning to believe that it could have been possible, and yet others of you cast the possibility aside. I don't believe it. It could not have happened. You are not so different from Jesus' chosen, the ones who knew him most intimately. They couldn't believe it either.

Fresh, and out of breath from their run to the tomb, Peter and the unnamed Beloved Disciple race to check out Mary's incredulous claim. The grave clothes were neatly folded and abandoned. You will recall a couple of weeks ago when we listened to the story of the raising of Lazarus, when he came out of the tomb, he was still wearing the wrapping and the people had to unbind him. There is significance in the difference. This raising indicates that the Word that became flesh in the beginning of John, has now made the transformation and ascended to the Father. This is not the final ascension. He is at one and the same time with the Father and still with his disciples.

Mystery encapsules this miraculous event. The routine laws of nature that God so aptly put in place with creation are now set aside, broken, to allow the raising of Jesus from the dead. Is it true? Can we build the foundation of our faith on this event actually happening? Is it true?

One writer suggests that Easter is an advanced course in Christianity and should only be undertaken after one has taken the introductory course dealing with Jesus' life and teachings. Walk with him through the Sermon on the Mount, hear his wisdom, experience his teachings and listen to what he says, then you are almost ready to accept what surely is impossible.

Interestingly, the records of the early church in Acts do not dwell on his teachings. They only take on significance when viewed through the lens of Easter, when you come to accept that he is God's chosen and has been raised into glory. If the beginning point is Easter for Christians, then we have to have a series of flashbacks to show how we got here. You've seen movies that begin at the end and then you slowly take in the story and build an understanding as to how you arrived at the climax. It is an effective way to present a plot and it works here for the Easter story.

The greatest story ever told becomes spellbinding because of its ending. It becomes a matter of faith. And in faith, there is always room for doubt. That's why we study it, we test it again and again, and we lean into the promises of God's unconditional love and forgiveness.

The message for you and I, the radical Good News of the Easter Sunday morning empty tomb tells us that through Jesus' resurrection we are gathered up and incorporated into the family of God. We are given the status of heirs and the right to be called the children of God.

I don't profess to understand the doctrine of atonement, how Jesus took our sins upon himself and erased them on the hill of

cavalry, but I do feel the power of the love that draws me in and tells me that you and I are worthy of that all encompassing love. Praise be to our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

◆ SERVICE OF THE TABLE ◆

One: We come to this table in friendship, seeking the community of Jesus Christ. As part of the Human Family, we fit in with those he came to save: the lost; the broken; the lonely; those afraid, the grieving, the sick and the hurting. Through the gift to us of Jesus' life and death, God has made us into Easter people. From desperation and despair of betrayal and torture, we have been brought into the light of Resurrection of Eternal Hope.

All: In this Breaking of Bread we gather as his disciples did as he shared with them one last time, an intimate and historic, simple meal – bread and wine – the symbolic connection to his body broken and blood poured.

One: When we partake of this feast together, it is not to belabor his grisly death, although it was beyond comprehension; it

is rather to remind us of why he incarnated as a human baby and faced all of life's temptations and trials as a grown adult. It was to announce God's Kingdom at hand – His kingdom within and around each of us, to illustrate for us the magnitude of God's love and to pattern His own unconditional obedience and love for the Father.

All: This bread is broken, as we give thanks to you, O God.

May it be for us the bread of life, the ultimate sustenance that grows our souls and feeds our spirits.

This wine that we drink quenches our thirst for the everlasting spiritual nourishment that accompanies Jesus as the center of our lives.

One: We eat and drink together in remembrance of Jesus. Taste, and See - He stands among us in His risen power.

May these simple elements of bread and wine - fill us with the power of the Holy Spirit in truth and love. Amen.

Taste, Touch, Feel, Smell, Savour: Christ is within and alive in you and I....

All: Jesus Christ - The bread of life...Jesus Christ - The one true vine.

Prayer following Communion (said together):

**For this holy time together we thank you, O God, for this sacred meal; Open our eyes that we may truly see;
Open our ears that we may clearly hear;
Open our hearts that we may fully love;
Bless us, And send us out:
That we may be a blessing to others. Amen.**

* CLOSING HYMN -- *Thine Is the Glory*

VU 173

*1 Thine is the glory,
risen, conquering Son:
endless is the victory
thou o'er death hast won.*

*Angels in bright raiment
rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave-clothes
where the body lay.*

[Refrain:]

*Thine is the glory,
risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory
thou o'er death hast won.*

*2 Lo, Jesus meets us,
risen from the tomb!
lovingly he greets us,
scatters fear and gloom.
Let the church with gladness
hymns of triumph sing,
for the Lord now liveth:
death hath lost its sting. [Refrain]*

*3 No more we doubt thee,
glorious Prince of life;
Life is nought without thee:
aid us in our strife;
make us more than conquerors,
through thy deathless love;
bring us safe through Jordan
to thy home above. [Refrain]*

COMMISSIONING

One: Go with joy to serve as God leads you.

Notice the lost within you and beyond you.

Celebrate the loving seeker we have in our God.

Go with joy this day and always. Amen.

BENEDICTION

One: Go now in peace,

Go now in joy,

May you know God's love forever

And spread that love to all you meet. Amen.

POSTLUDE - Allegretto, *Sonata #18 in D Major*, KV 576

W.A. Mozart