

Easter Sunday 2025

A Sermon Preached by The Rev Ian M Delinger

on April 20, 2025

Acts 10.34-43 / Psalm 118.1-2,14-24 / 1 Corinthians 15.19-26 / John 20.1-18

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Happy Easter!

We are here to celebrate The Resurrection of Jesus. And for us, His triumph over death is *our* triumph over death. So, it is said: *We are Easter People*. As Christians, we are a people who live in the glory of The Resurrection with full knowledge that death is not the end, and in the hope of our own resurrection. We live in this hope with joy!

But how can we be joyful when the world is literally falling down around us?! Whenever you turn on the news, it's just chaos. It doesn't matter your politics, we are living in chaotic times. And even if you ignore what's going on in DC, sin, pain and suffering are still all around us. So, to say that we are Easter People who live in hope with joy seems a bit callous when there is so much misery in our world, both far away and in our own cities and neighborhoods. Well, you can't have Easter without Lent, without Good Friday. To know joy, you must know pain. To know love, you must know hate. To know Heaven, you must know the world. And that's why we live a season of prayer, fasting and almsgiving before we live a season of joy. As writer Barbara Johnson put it:

We are "Easter people living in a Good Friday world."¹

We have no trouble seeing the Good Friday world around us.

¹ Barbara Johnson (2000). "Boomerang Joy: Joy That Goes Around, Comes Around", p.167, Zondervan

Let's look at Mary into today's Gospel. When she saw the stone rolled away from the tomb, she panicked, so Mary RUNS to tell the news to Peter and John that Jesus' body is not where they laid it. And then Peter and John RUN to discover what Mary had told them. Then, Peter and John go home, presumably confused and consumed by the deepest anguish. This was vandalizing and desecrating a grave and stealing a body! But Mary remains in the garden in her grief.

- *This is their getting fired from their stable job of a long career.*
- *This is their father getting deported.*
- *This is their loss of their entire retirement savings.*
- *This is their loss of their business.*
- *This is their selling the family home to afford a care home.*
- *This is more than just the death of their closest friend.*

The angels 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.*"

Utter devastation. This is the end ... or is it?

<Show Shirt>
<Jesus saying: "I'm back!">

And then, Mary hears her name.

Jesus said to her, "*Mary!*"

The Risen Jesus calls Mary by her name. The missing body for which she was searching found her! And it was not just the body, it was the Resurrected Jesus – not resuscitated – Resurrected! The immense shock combined with joy must have been overwhelming! Her natural response was to hug Jesus, but He says, 'No'! So, with this immense joy, the Apostle to the Apostles: Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "*I have seen the Lord*"!!! She was renewed in that moment when Jesus said, "*Mary!*" when the Resurrected Christ called her by name.

Easter is a time of Renewal. Jesus' Resurrection ushered in renewal.

The Gospel begins with:

It was the first day of the week.

John the Poet Gospeler is deliberately echoing the Creation: Jesus' Resurrection is the beginning of God's new Creation! In the Second Lesson today:

as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.

With Jesus' Resurrection, a new heaven and a new earth have been created. It's renewal. We are in the old earth, but we *know* that Jesus' Resurrection gives us access to that new Heaven and new Earth ... whatever and wherever they are.

And if we are Easter People, we are the Agents of Renewal. This season we will hear the stories of Renewal/Effecting Change/Counter-culturalism/Resistance. And as we live as Easter People, we are Agents of Renewal, which in our Good Friday World will look like and *feel* like Resistance, just like it did in the Acts of the Apostles; just as it did in Ancient Corinth; just as it did in ancient Rome. This is what it means to be Easter People.

Many think the term *Easter People* came from John Paul II's 1986 papal trip to Australia:

We do not pretend that life is all beauty. We are aware of darkness and sin, of poverty and pain. But we know Jesus has conquered sin and passed through His own pain to the glory of the Resurrection. And we live in the light of His Paschal Mystery — the mystery of his Death and Resurrection. 'We are an Easter People and Alleluia is our song!' We are not looking for a shallow joy but rather a joy that comes from faith, that grows through unselfish love, that respects the

'fundamental duty of love of neighbor, without which it would be unbecoming to speak of Joy.'

Easter is our reminder that we are to live the counter-cultural love of Jesus Christ. Not as some persecuted minority. Not as an entitlement to wield power. Not as an excuse to oppress or dehumanize others who don't agree with us. We are to live the counter-cultural love of Jesus Christ as agents of Jesus' love for all. As in our First Lesson, we are to be "*preaching peace by Jesus Christ*". Preaching *peace* into the chaos of today is indeed counter-cultural, it is indeed resistance. And we can only do that through the strength we gain from the Renewal of Easter.

In this world of chaos, pain and suffering, be renewed by Jesus' Resurrection to be the counter-cultural resistance to the growing aggression, violent language and anger that is our Good Friday World. Be Easter People and be the Jesus' love that you want to see in the world.

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The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!