

Sermon – Easter Sunday (A) 2026

Scripture Texts: Jeremiah 31:1-6; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Colossians 3:1-4; Matthew 28:1-10
Sermon preached at Gloria Dei (Old Swedes') Episcopal Church

Focus Statement: *The Resurrection of Jesus shakes the foundations of power and oppression and fear that dominate our world, founding a new world in which love and mercy reign supreme.*

Loving God: May my spoken words be faithful to your written Word, and lead us all to better know the living WORD, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Outline:

1. A world held captive by death
 - a. “Come, see the place where he lay. *Then* go quickly and tell his disciples...”
 - i. It is Easter Sunday, a day of hope and new life.
 - ii. I’m grateful that you’ve come here to celebrate that reality, but I’m also all too aware of the brokenness in our world.
 - iii. These words of the angel capture some of that tension. He has to begin with “Do not be afraid”, and then gives a joyful pronouncement. But he recognizes that they can’t go forth until they’ve seen the place where the body lay for themselves.
 - iv. More broadly, we cannot get to Easter without going through Good Friday. We cannot get to resurrection without first dying. So, as much as we all need a word of hope today, I want to begin with something darker.
 - b. Where were you on 9/11? Do you remember the fear and grief and anxiety? That day changed the world, especially for Americans. It was a day of shaking and a day of revealing.
 - i. I grew up in the 80’s and 90’s as the child of a naval aviator. I knew the strength of our country. The Berlin Wall came down, ending the Cold War, and we displayed our dominance in the first Gulf War.
 - ii. But, on 9/11, our sense of security and easy dominance was shaken, and a new reality was revealed. As strong and secure as we thought we were, it became clear that violence and terror could strike anywhere.
 - iii. As much as I might disagree with him on most things, top White House aid Stephen Miller has described the world as it was revealed on 9/11: *“We live in a world in which you can talk all you want about international niceties and everything else, but we live in a world, in the real world ... that is governed by strength, that is governed by force, that is governed by power. These are the iron laws of the world that have existed since the beginning of time.”*
 - c. Though we don’t usually put it so bluntly, this seems to be the reality of our world. The people with economic and military power determine the course of our lives.

2. The world is shaken.
 - a. Matthew is unique among the Gospel accounts, portraying an earthquake at both the death of Jesus and at the resurrection. And, I believe that he is trying to tell us that these events shake the earth even more deeply than 9/11.
 - b. The world of Jesus' time was also a world governed by strength, by force, and by power.
 - i. And the cross reveals where those forces always lead. When God came among us in Jesus, healing the sick, welcoming the outcasts, preaching love and forgiveness, the people in power nailed him to a tree.
 - ii. The cross calls us to recognize that strength and force and power only ever lead to death.
 - c. But that is not the end of the story. While the cross challenges the legitimacy and sustainability of a world built on strength and force and power, the resurrection shakes that world to its foundation.
 - i. Strength and force and power can put us in the grave, but they can go no further. They may be the iron laws that have existed since the beginning of time, but – as C.S. Lewis puts it in the Chronicles of Narnia – there is a deeper magic from before the beginning of time.
 - ii. Jesus' resurrection breaks the power of death, and in doing so it shatters those iron laws. The resurrection says that God's redeeming love ultimately triumphs over strength and force and power.
3. A new world is revealed.
 - a. You may remember that on 9/11, the politicians from both political parties came together to grieve and to chart a course forward. It was a rare show of political unity, but it was a unity based on fear and hate and the thirst for revenge.
 - b. The empty tomb of Jesus offers a better unity – one that begins with the words "Do not be afraid."
 - i. We no longer have to fear death, because it is not the end of our story. And, so, we are empowered to work for something better.
 - ii. In the empty tomb, we catch a vision of the new world that God is creating out of the rubble of the old. In this new world, mercy and forgiveness and justice are more powerful than the checkbook or the sword or the gun. In this new world, women get to be leaders who bring the good news to men who are trapped in fear. In this new world, love is stronger than hate.
 - c. I love that the gospel tells us that the women went forth from the empty tomb with fear and great joy.
 - i. They have just seen an angel and evidence that Jesus has been raised, and yet they are still somewhat afraid.

- ii. This tells me that there is room, in this new world, for our fear and even our doubt. But it also tells me that fear and doubt will ultimately give way to joy, as we follow the risen Jesus into this new world.

Amen.