

CLAIRMONT COMMUNITY CHURCH

Easter Sunday: Joy Comes in the Morning

April 5, 2026 | Scripture: John 20:1-18

Good morning, church family! Happy Easter to all of you.

Take a moment to think about what springtime is actually like here in the Peace Country. Albertan weather never quite makes up its mind this time of year. We might wake up to bright, beautiful sunshine, only to find ourselves bundled up in winter coats again by the afternoon.

Even on the days when the air feels warm and spring is finally trying to arrive, we still have to step over stubborn patches of cold, icy snow on the ground. We are constantly watching two completely different seasons fighting for the exact same space. Winter and spring are always trying to happen at the exact same time.

Believe it or not, our human hearts often work exactly like our unpredictable spring weather. Have you ever felt two completely different feelings at the exact same time?

Think about that for a moment. Have you ever felt happy and sad together? Maybe you felt so happy because you were going to a fun summer camp, but you also felt sad because you had to say goodbye to your family for a whole week. Or maybe you felt excited to learn how to ride a new bicycle, but you were also a little bit angry and frustrated because you kept falling down.

We are beautifully complex creations. God created us with big hearts and incredibly busy minds. Sometimes, our feelings get all mixed up. We can feel hope and despair at the exact same time. We can feel joy and sorrow. We can

feel deep love and sudden anger. We can have the warm sunshine and the cold snow sitting right next to each other inside our chests.

A Morning of Mixed Emotions

Today is Easter Sunday. It is the absolute happiest day in the entire Christian calendar. But the very first Easter morning was not filled with happy worship songs and bright celebrations right away. In fact, it started out as one of the saddest, most confusing days ever for the people who had spent the most time with Jesus and who loved him dearly.

You just heard the account read aloud from the Gospel of John. I want you to use your imaginations and think back to the words we just listened to. Let's explore all the different, mixed-up feelings the friends and family of Jesus experienced in just one single morning.

The events of that very first Easter began very early in the day. Scripture tells us that it was still dark when Mary Magdalene came to the tomb. Try to picture Mary in your mind. She was one of the closest friends Jesus had. Just a couple of days before this Sunday morning, she had watched Jesus die on the cross. She was right there at the crucifixion, while Jesus was being tortured, even when most of his other friends had run away and were hiding. She saw him scream, she heard him cry. Sounds she would never forget. Her heart was completely broken.

Have you ever felt a sadness so big that it felt like a heavy rock sitting right on your chest? That feeling is called despair. Despair is when you feel like things are so dark that they will never get bright again. Mary was feeling complete despair. She woke up in the dark, if she had even been able to sleep at all. The sun hadn't even come up yet. That dark sky matched exactly how she surely felt on the inside. She walked to the garden tomb with some of the other women to show her respects. She was carrying a deep, heavy sorrow.

But when they arrived at the garden, they saw something terrifying. The heavy stone that was supposed to be blocking Jesus' tomb had been rolled away. If you read the different books of the Bible, you'll notice that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all recount the events of this morning from slightly different angles. Matthew and Luke say angels appeared to the women right away with a joyful

message that Jesus was alive. But Mark tells us the women were so afraid they fled and initially said nothing to anyone.

The Chaos of the Garden

Why are the stories so mixed up? Because human beings in a panic are mixed up. That morning was pure chaos. It was a blizzard of emotions. When Mary Magdalene first saw the stone moved, we're told that her brain jumped to the worst-case scenario. She thought someone had stolen the body of Jesus. Was it not enough that he was treated so badly and killed? Now they couldn't even let him rest in peace? She felt sudden, intense fear.

She ran as fast as she could to find Peter and John. She didn't tell them Jesus was alive. She told them exactly what she feared the most. "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."

Peter and the other disciple sprang into action. I imagine they were too ready at that point to fight, the way they perhaps wished they had fought a couple of days earlier when their friend was first arrested. They started running toward the tomb. John, who had stayed near to Mary during the crucifixion and was certainly also traumatized by the sights and sounds of his best friend being tortured, ran faster and got to the tomb first.

Have you ever run as fast as you can because you were worried about something? When you can't think straight, but adrenaline kicks in and keeps you going? Peter and John were probably completely out of breath. Their hearts were pounding. They hadn't slept well or eaten much in a couple of days. They might have had headaches from fatigue or from crying. When they got to the tomb and looked inside, they saw the empty clothes, but Jesus was missing. They didn't shout for joy. They were puzzled and confused. It was early. They were stuck in the blizzard, metaphorically, waiting for the sun to come out. They didn't know what to do, so they went back to where they were staying, to try to gather their thoughts.

He Knows Your Name

But Mary stayed behind. The other disciples left, but she stayed crying outside the tomb. Mourning the loss of her best friend for the second time in three days. All those mixed-up feelings crashed down on her. The passage from John tells us that at some point she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been.

They asked her why she was crying. She said they had taken away her Lord. She didn't even know who. Notice something incredibly important here. Even seeing and hearing real angels up close didn't stop her sadness right away. She was focused completely on her grief. Have you ever been so sad or so upset that even when someone tries to cheer you up with a joke or a treat, you just can't? That's where Mary was.

Her grief was perfectly normal. We all feel grief. When we lose someone we love, or when a situation goes terribly wrong, sadness is exactly what we are supposed to feel. Jesus never tells us to hide our sadness or pretend everything is fine when we're hurting.

But then the most beautiful thing in the history of the world happened. Mary turned around and saw Jesus standing with her. Her eyes were full of tears. Her brain was riddled with shock and fatigue and sorrow. She thought Jesus was the gardener, so she told him, rather illogically, to give her back the body he stole, and she would carry it away all by herself just to keep Jesus' body safe. She wasn't thinking clearly, and she was operating out of a very crowded cocktail of emotions.

Then, Jesus did one simple, quiet thing. He spoke her name. He said to her, "Mary!" That was all it took. Just one single word. Her name. Jesus said her name, and she recognized his voice. It wasn't the first time he had said her name. It was a sound she treasured enough to remember and recognize.

Can you imagine the explosion of joy inside her chest at that exact second? All the dark, heavy feelings from the morning probably didn't disappear, but they were shoved aside by a whole new set of emotions. It was like going from darkest winter to brightest summer in an instant. The melting of despair, and the overpowering of sorrow by joy. I'm sure she kept crying, but her tears suddenly meant something different.

Mary Magdelene, one of Jesus' closest friends, became the very first person to share the good news of Easter. She carried the message of hope to a world that desperately needed to hear it.

"Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning."

— Psalm 30:5

That is exactly what happened on Easter. The dark night of weeping was finally over. The morning of joy had arrived. The resurrection of Jesus is the reason why, as Christians, we can hold onto hope even in the heavy darkness of despair. We all have to face darkness at some point in our life, but with the rising of the Son comes the promise of brighter times.

The Choice of Identity

Nearly 2,000 years have passed since Mary stood crying in that garden, but human hearts have not changed. We still feel the exact same feelings Mary felt: sadness when things go wrong in our families; fear when we hear scary news; confusion when life takes an unexpected turn. We live in a world where the sunny days and the snowy days overlap.

But Jesus meets us right where we are. He stood with Mary while she cried, and he addressed her by name. He calls you by your name, too. This brings us directly back to the incredible baptisms we celebrated just a few moments ago. We watched two fantastic kids from our congregation make a very public, very powerful declaration.

What does baptism actually mean for us today? Baptism is a beautiful, outward sign of an inward choice. Christianity is a choice. We are never forced to follow Jesus. We choose to enter into a real, living relationship with him. When we watched those two children get baptized today, we watched them make a conscious choice to celebrate the name of Jesus. They declared to everyone in this room that they have placed their identity in him.

Your identity is who you are at your very core. It is the most true thing about you. When you put your identity in Jesus, it means you remember that you are part of his family, no matter what is happening around you. You bear his name.

Being a Christian doesn't mean you will never be sad again. It doesn't mean you'll never feel angry or confused or scared. Or that you'll never mess up. The snow will still fall sometimes. Winters will still come and go. Being a Christian means that when you feel those hard things, you have someone strong to hold onto. You have a Saviour who knows your name. You have a friend who has conquered death itself and who promises to never, ever leave your side.

Conclusion: Hope is Alive

When you feel sad this week, or next month, or even next year, I want you to remember Mary Magdalene. Remember that her sorrow was very real, but it was not the end of her story. Joy comes with the morning. When you feel despair, remember the empty tomb. Remember that Jesus is stronger than death and stronger than any problem you will ever face.

Choosing to follow Jesus is a choice to let his bright light shine into your dark moments. To our two newly baptized friends, you made a powerful, wonderful choice today. You said a big, loud yes to Jesus. We are so incredibly proud of you, and we promise as a church family to walk with you on this journey.

For everyone else sitting here today, I want to encourage you to think about your own choice. Have you taken on the name of Jesus? Are you putting your identity in him at all times? You can make that choice today, whether it's for the first time or the millionth time.

Easter is a giant reminder that we serve a living God. We can be completely honest with God about our pain, our sadness and our big questions. But we never, ever have to give up hope. Hope is alive.

So, let's keep the celebration going today. Let's keep the joy of worship in our hearts as we leave this building later. Let's cheer for our newly baptized friends. Let's enjoy our delicious family meals today. Let's embrace the incredible, life-changing joy of resurrection morning. The tomb is empty. Death is defeated. Joy has come.

Let's pray.

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