

A New Day II
Mark 15 & Mark 16
Colebrook Congregational Church
April 16, 2017 / Easter Sunday

Back in the earliest days of the Church, Easter looked very different from how it does today. It was a lot darker, and more ascetic, yet full of food, and there was only a Sunrise Service...and it was the only time when people were Baptized.

What happened with the converts, either from Judaism or Paganism, was weeks of intense instruction during Lent. And then late on Good Friday, they would be taken underground into darkness. This was so to mirror what happened to Jesus that day. He was crucified, and died late in the day, and was taken to His tomb in a cave. So they are symbolically going through what Jesus went through.

They would stay underground, together as a group, and fast. From Friday night, through Saturday. And then early on Sunday, as the sun rose, they were led out from underground and baptized. They then joined the rest of the Community for a Sunrise Service, followed by a day-long feast and celebration. They were mirroring the Resurrection of Jesus on that Sunday morning. As Jesus laid at rest for those two days and then rose again in the morning to a new day in His new life, those new converts emerged into a new day and started their new life as faithful Followers of Jesus in the Church Community.

When Jesus sacrificed Himself for us, He made Himself the ultimate scapegoat, and then rose again. He showed the Disciples, the Women, and all that witnessed, that it was a New Day. A new chapter was beginning in their lives and a new era was beginning. And it was beginning with the sunrise, on that Easter Sunday.

A New Day can be a cause for happiness. Changes can be made, and a new positive perspective is available. It is a hopeful outlook into the future. We just need to seize the opportunity of the New Day and let it move us forward.

So now, as we turn to the coming celebrations with our families on this Easter Sunday, remember that it is a New Day. And look forward into the coming weeks with hope in our hearts.

Please join me in the spirit of prayer:

In the joy and hope of this Easter morning, we sing Alleluia with the fullness of hearts. We cry, Christ is Risen! We behold how Love is stronger than Death! Alleluia! In the joy and hope of this Easter morning, we realize the depth and breadth of what it means to be your Easter people. For we are the ones who are called to go into the places in our lives and world to work for justice and life for all in your Creation. It is up to us to bear witness to the promise of resurrection, in the joy and hope of this Easter morning, O God, give us the courage to bear your living Love into every corner of our lives, so that your peaceable realm will be so, in Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Intercessory Prayer

[PAUSE]

O God, with faces touched by the light of a new day, and hearts warmed by our prayers and praises, we come before you to pray for the needs of our world.

We give you thanks for all the blessings and gifts you have given us, for those you have led into our lives and for moving us into the lives of others. And we thank you for using us as instruments of your divine love for us all.

We pray for the forgiveness of sins known and unknown, for falling short of how we should be towards ourselves, towards our fellow humans, and to all of Your Creation. May we be reassured of Your forgiveness, so we may try to do better and make amends as we move forward.

Into the light of Easter morning we raise those who are struggling with illness, with despair over their lives, or with the breakdown of relationships. We raise up those places in our world where war, violence, poverty and need are the experiences of everyday life. We hold in our hearts the pain of those suffering violence, bereavement or conflict. May the light of Christ shine upon them, and may you fortify us to better serve you through our service to our neighbors.

We pray for ourselves. We pray for Your guidance in all that we do, to live up to the standard Jesus set for us. We pray that we recognize your messengers and those You send to help us and redirect us for who they are, and that we show the wisdom to heed them.

We especially pray for:

O God, Open our eyes, that we who seek to follow You may recognize Your face in the faces of those who are in need. Open our ears, that we who seek to hear Your word may recognize Your love in the stories which are often drowned out. Open our hearts, that we who seek Your way of life may be bold in witnessing to your longing for justice and peace. Amen

Mark 15:21-16:20

21 They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. 22 Then they brought Jesus* to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). 23 And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. 24 And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

25 It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. 26 The inscription of the charge against him read, 'The King of the Jews.' 27 And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left.* 29 Those who passed by derided* him, shaking their heads and saying, 'Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, 30 save yourself, and come down from the cross!' 31 In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. 32 Let the Messiah,* the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe.' Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

33 When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land* until three in the afternoon. 34 At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'* 35 When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, 'Listen, he is calling for Elijah.' 36 And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, 'Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.' 37 Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. 38 And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. 39 Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he* breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'*

40 There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. 41 These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

42 When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, 43 Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 44 Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. 45 When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. 46 Then Joseph* bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body,* wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. 47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body* was laid.

16 When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. 2 And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. 3 They had been saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' 4 When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. 5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. 6 But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.' 8 So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.*

9 [[Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. 10She went out and told those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping. 11But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.

12 After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. 13And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.

14 Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table; and he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.* 15And he said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news* to the whole creation. 16The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. 17And these signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18they will pick up snakes in their hands,* and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.'

19 So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. 20And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it.*]]