



The Rev. Jennifer King Daugherty  
Easter Sunday – April 5, 2026

## Because Christ is Risen

*Jeremiah 31:1-6; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Colossians 3:1-4; Matthew 28:1-10; 16-20*



*The Resurrection, Kelly Latimore*

[Matthew 21:1-11] *After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me." Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son*

*and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

Happy Easter to you!

This past week, I've been struck by the way new events in the world and in our lives unfold alongside memories of the past, both asking for our attention.

Launch preparations for the Artemis II Moon Mission coincided with the beginning of Passover.

While many of us were glued to our screens listening as the crew worked through their capsule check lists, Jews were gathering with families and friends to remember the Israelites' exodus from slavery to freedom.

As conflict in the Middle East intensified this week, with casualties and destruction on all sides, Christians observed Holy Week, remembering Jesus' journey to the cross. Yesterday, as a dedicated team gathered here to decorate the church for Easter, others attended bell-tolling ceremonies to mark the 58<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

It was a week of awe, joy, dismay, grief, and somber remembrance, a vivid reminder of the paradoxes of being human. And today, we celebrate the greatest paradox of all – resurrection – the mystery that Jesus' death on the

cross gives way to new life -- new life so transformative that it reshapes humanity's understanding of who God is and who we are, too. Not just once, 2000 years ago, but today and every day since.

The first Easter did not dawn with the joy of resurrection, though. It dawned with fear. Jesus' followers have witnessed the machinery of the Roman empire and its collaborators twist truth, abuse power and execute their beloved friend. They spend the Sabbath in grief.

The next morning, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James go to see Jesus' tomb – as if they need the physical presence of the tomb in order to accept that he is gone. That the unraveling of the fabric of their lives is not a bad dream, but real.

They are rocked by grief and vulnerability, but the first words spoken into that trembling moment are "Do not be afraid. Jesus has been raised, as he said." And as they run to share this baffling news, still terrified, they encounter Jesus himself, who repeats, "Do not be afraid. You will see me again."

Of course, they are afraid – they have seen the terrible depth of what humanity is capable of – how lust for power, greed, and violence can destroy goodness and wound generations. But on Easter day and in the days to come, as Jesus' disciples absorb the reality of resurrection, they understand that though there is much to fear, something more powerful is also true. God's love reaches deeper than any human destruction.

We are living in a moment in which fear has a very loud voice. All over the globe, in war-torn countries and prosperous cities like Seattle, rising numbers of people say they live with daily worry and anxiety. Fear is widely shared, amplified, and often used as a tool of power. It narrows our vision and tells us that what we see and experience right now is the whole story.

But Easter tells us something different. Fear is not the whole story. Love, revealed in resurrection, is already writing a new chapter.

In Jesus, God enters the very heart of suffering, not turning away from pain, or disgrace, or death itself. This means there is no sorrow we can experience that God does not understand from the

inside. No distress we carry that God does not hold with compassion. No depth we can fall to that God has not already entered. God goes all the way down into human brokenness in order to meet us there, to hold us there, and to bring life where we thought none was possible. And in raising Jesus, God begins to raise all of creation toward healing and wholeness.

Resurrection does not erase the wounds of suffering. The risen Jesus still bears the marks of crucifixion. Injustice, loss, and sorrow are real. But none of these have the final word. This is the mystery at the heart of Easter: that God does not stand apart from the pain of creation but enters into it completely.

And God's desire to bring life out of even the most bleak situations is not confined to the past. It endures in our world and in us today. So, when fear arises in our own lives – when everything seems unstable and the future feels fragile – Easter invites us to understand it differently.

The Artemis II astronaut Jeremy Hansen describes fear as an indicator – like a smoke detector that alerts you when something needs attention. Fear does not always mean imminent threat.

Sometimes it is the sign that we have truly seen the brokenness of our time. Sometimes it is a signal that something is changing, that we may be standing at a threshold, a place where God is already preparing something new.

Jesus' last words in Matthew's gospel are, "I am with you always, to the end of the age," This is the promise that makes resurrection not only a past event, but a present one. Christ is with us in every uncertain moment, and in every movement toward relationship or courage.

Because Christ is risen, fear is no longer the truest thing about us. Love is. Love tells the truth. Love acts with compassion and refuses to abandon the vulnerable. Love persists for love's sake, especially when outcomes are uncertain. We do not live entirely without fear. But we no longer live governed by it.

The promise of resurrection is difficult to grasp fully, so the church turns to symbols to help us see what words alone can't express – eggs that appear

closed and still even while they hold vitality within; lilies that emerge from bulbs buried in the ground, beauty rising from what seems barren; and bunnies, known for fertility and abundance since ancient times. Creation itself preaches the reality of resurrection!

So, when you eat your chocolate eggs and smell the fragrant flowers, remember what they proclaim: Nothing can separate us from the love of God — not death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come.

God's Spirit is already at work within us and among us, drawing us toward compassion, courage, and hope. We do not need to wait for fear to disappear to begin living the way Jesus showed us. We can love now. We can care for each other now. We can tell the truth now. Because resurrection is not only something we celebrate — it is something we live.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!