

Grace Devotion

Week of March 31, 2024

Pastor Fred Young

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For this Easter Sunday, I would like to share with you words from a favorite poet and theologian, Jan Richardson. I find her blessings speak wisdom into the scriptures for me, granting deeper insight and new perspective. Here are her words on our Easter text from John.

I never fail to be dazzled by this moment when Jesus calls out the name of the woman whom he finds weeping by his tomb. Mary. At the sound of her name, the Magdalene finally sees and knows who has found her there. It is a stunning moment of recognition.

Yet as I spiral back around this passage this week, what draws my attention is not only the way that Mary Magdalene sees Christ when he calls her name. What tugs at me this time is how, in that moment of hearing her name, Mary Magdalene must see herself.

With an inflection that only Christ could have given to it, his speaking of her name conveys everything: all their history, all that passed between them in their friendship, all that he knows of this woman whom he healed and who, along with other women, traveled with him and sustained him from her own resources. He knows her. He sees her. And now he asks her to see herself as he does.

Mary...

In that moment, and in the call and commissioning that will soon come, the risen Christ gives Mary Magdalene to herself. Long ago, Jesus had released Mary from the seven demons that haunted her. Now he releases her again, this time from clinging to him, from becoming entangled with him. Where holding onto him might seem holy, Christ sees—and enables Mary Magdalene to see—that her path and her life lie elsewhere. In going, Mary

affirms that she has seen what she needed to see: not just Christ in the glory of his resurrection, but also herself, graced with the glory that he sees in her.

This day, what will we allow ourselves to see: of Christ, of ourselves? How would it be to know ourselves as he does, to see ourselves as he sees us, to know that the risen Christ speaks our name, too, and releases us, to tell what we have seen? What will you proclaim as you leave the empty tomb this day?

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The myrrh bearers: Mary Magdalene, Mary and Martha of Bethany, Joanna, Salome, Susana, and two more Marys, the women who came to honor Jesus and prepare his body, hastened to the tomb before the sun began to glow. Grief stricken, they planned to continue the rituals started by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea before the Sabbath. The women found the stone rolled away. Peter and John raced each other to the place where Jesus was laid but found only the burial wrappings in the empty space. Jesus, mistaken for the gardener, moved out of the shadow of despair and into the light of that first Easter morning. Death is moved to life, the rejected stone is lifted to become the cornerstone of faith, and the horror and heartbreak of Good Friday are transformed to the rejoicing gladness of the Lord's new day!

As Christians, we know how the Easter story begins, ends and begins again. What we need to work on is our understanding of how Christ's resurrection continues to impact our lives every day in ordinary ways. "Mary!" With this one word, Mary truly and completely saw her Lord, just as wonderfully, she saw herself, complete. On this Easter Sunday, what is it that you need to hear from Jesus? How might having Christ see you and call your name change your life? The tomb is empty, but our hearts are full!

PRAYER: Hallelujah, the Light of the world continues to shine! Amen.

Blessings!
Pastor Fred

March 31, 2024 Easter Sunday

Gathering Music

Welcome/Announcements

Westminster Chimes

GOSPEL READING: John 20:1-18

Prelude

****CALL TO WORSHIP**

Christ is Risen!

Christ is risen, indeed!

Hope is alive!

Hope is alive, indeed!

God's love is eternal!

Hallelujah!

Let us give thanks for what God has done.

****HYMN: "Christ Arose"**

#216

****Opening Prayer**

God of grace and power, we come rejoicing in Christ's empty tomb. We come trusting in the good news that tells us Christ is with us. For the Risen Christ is living proof that you care about our lives, O God. The Risen Christ offers to us glimpses of hope, even in our tears. As the tomb is not quiet. It speaks. It proclaims! It is a

promise of eternal life! Thank you, gracious and almighty God. Amen.

Sharing the Peace of Christ

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Moment for silent prayer

ASSURANCE OF GRACE

Joys and Concerns

Prayer/Lord's Prayer (debts/debtors)

SPECIAL MUSIC: "Crown Him Lord This Easter Day!

~Grace Choir

A Time for the Young at Heart

Poem: "I Have Seen the Lord"

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

SERMON

"Empty Tomb, Full Hearts!"

****HYMN: "Because He Lives"**

#213

Thank you for your tithes and offerings

****Doxology**

****Prayer of Dedication**

#625

SERVICE OF COMMUNION

SANCTUS

Holy is Jesus, God Incarnate, the Risen Christ,

whose mercy gathers us together in community,
whose grace meets us in our brokenness,
and whose loving faithfulness gives us renewed
hope.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

SHARING OF THE BREAD AND CUP

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

**HYMN “Christ the Lord is Risen Today” #217

**FINAL BLESSING

“A Choral Benediction”

**POSTLUDE

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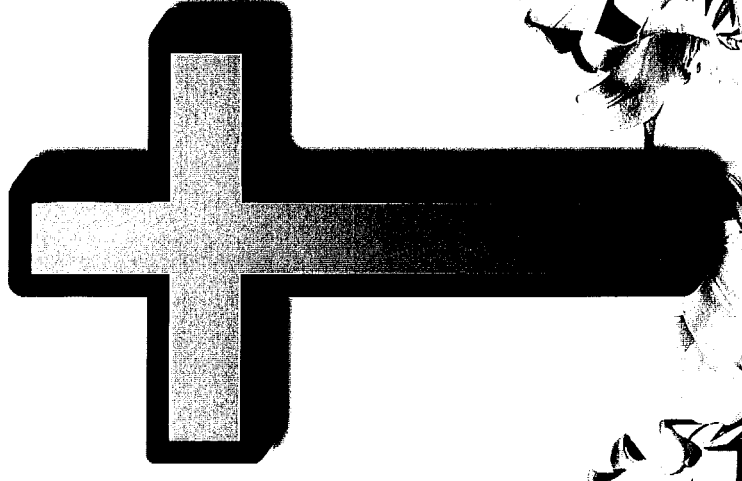
Approved On-Liturgy from The United Church of Christ

Alleluia! in All the Places of our Lives! Service Prayers for Easter Day was written by the Rev. Elizabeth Dilley, Minister and Team Leader for MESA (Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization), UCC. She and the rest of the national staff are praying for all of our congregations this Easter season. Copyright 2020 Justice and Local Church Ministries, Faith INFO Ministry Team, United Church of Christ, 700 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44115-1100. Permission granted to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All publishing rights reserved.

To Give Thanks for What God has Done, Service prayers with Communion for Easter Sunday Year B, was written by the Rev. Dr. Sheila Harvey Guillaume, pastor of Union Congregational United Church of Christ in West Palm Beach.

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HE IS RISEN!



“I Have Seen the Lord” (The Voice of Mary Magdalene)
John 20:18

I rose to dress, so cold and dark,
With no light in my room.
The Sabbath had been sad and stark -
My Lord lay in the tomb.
I reached the garden where he lay
But saw as I drew near
Someone had rolled the stone away.
My heart was filled with fear.

I ran to tell Peter and John,
And they returned with me.
The tomb was empty; he was gone.
Where could our dear Lord be?
The two men left, and I stood weeping,
But then to my surprise,
I saw two angels vigil keeping –
Right before my eyes.

I turned and saw the gardener there.
“Mary,” he called my name.
“Teacher!” I cried, an answered prayer.
Life would not be the same –
For death and sin had been defeated,
And hope and life restored.
Rejoice! Let this news be repeated:
“Yes, I have seen the Lord!” Patti Miller



The key to lasting happiness

You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. —1 Peter 1:8

What does it mean to be happy?

Dennis Wholey, author of a book called *Are You Happy?*, reports that according to experts, only about 20% of Americans today are happy. One psychiatrist, Thomas Szasz, even went so far as to say, "Happiness is an imaginary condition, formerly attributed by the living to the dead, now usually attributed by adults to children and by children to adults."



To really understand the key to finding happiness, it's important to first understand what it is. Looking at the biblical use of the word, we find 'happy' is most often used to describe a state of being emotionally satisfied with one's circumstances. The problem, however, comes when those circumstances change.

This is why lasting happiness eludes almost everyone... because it's based upon our circumstances, which can change in a moment. But there is a biblical attitude that, when we have it, will keep us emotionally satisfied even when circumstances change – it's called 'joy'.

The key to lasting happiness is to let God's Spirit express joy through you that's not based on your current situation. **Instead of looking for your circumstances to satisfy you, look to God to give you His inexpressible joy in all circumstances!**

Prayer Challenge

Ask God to express His supernatural joy through you in all circumstances.

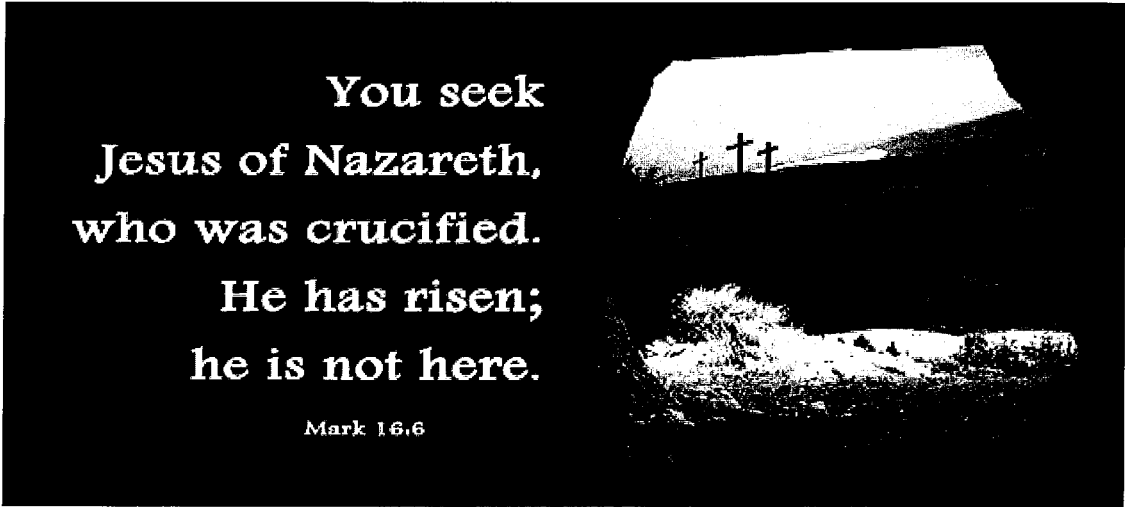
Questions for thought

How have you seen God at work creating an attitude of joy in the midst of challenges for you or someone else?

What circumstances are you facing today that require God's supernatural power for you to find happiness and contentment?

<https://www.seniorlivingministries.org/2024/02/the-key-to-lasting-happiness-5/>

Mark 16: 1-8



**You seek
Jesus of Nazareth,
who was crucified.
He has risen;
he is not here.**

Mark 16:6

M	G	L	Y	B	X	L	T	N	I	O	N	A	O	G	C	T	Z	B	F
R	I	M	W	L	S	S	T	G	R	W	K	A	R	E	T	E	P	Q	O
E	Y	L	J	C	D	A	D	F	X	B	S	F	P	P	K	K	K	V	V
K	O	L	U	T	F	E	B	O	R	T	F	X	J	T	F	B	R	H	N
U	T	P	K	O	Z	O	Z	B	O	H	C	W	U	X	R	T	R	G	O
P	N	I	G	Q	A	L	P	N	A	Z	H	B	L	T	Y	W	V	N	H
J	E	S	U	S	R	E	I	F	Y	T	E	T	F	H	Y	R	G	H	L
W	U	X	X	O	Q	S	P	S	H	W	H	Q	N	H	Y	H	A	O	B
M	B	V	O	D	H	E	Y	Y	W	A	U	R	K	E	Q	T	H	M	Y
G	A	Z	B	M	D	E	N	T	V	J	J	E	R	I	S	E	N	T	X
Y	I	J	E	M	P	Q	E	Z	O	F	Y	H	P	W	P	R	W	P	Y
W	E	N	G	D	B	D	W	Z	J	M	W	T	F	P	C	A	O	D	N
G	T	O	G	C	Y	B	D	X	R	T	B	O	V	L	R	Z	A	Z	H
T	L	H	P	D	O	T	I	X	C	R	Q	M	X	E	U	A	Z	T	W
B	Y	W	I	F	L	D	I	S	C	I	P	L	E	S	C	N	U	S	T
K	W	U	R	G	O	A	M	A	Z	E	D	L	Q	D	I	F	Q	J	P
A	I	B	A	K	Y	J	E	N	G	C	I	Q	J	H	F	G	U	W	Q
Y	L	N	X	X	Y	Q	F	H	T	L	Y	N	I	H	I	B	W	W	F
X	S	P	L	N	W	S	Y	I	A	G	F	V	E	N	E	Z	V	I	H
D	V	F	O	V	G	R	U	G	P	R	T	O	X	S	D	J	H	N	T

AMAZED
CRUCIFIED
JESUS
NAZARETH
ROBE

ANOINT
DISCIPLES
MARY
PETER
SABBATH

ASTONISHMENT
GALILEE
MOTHER
RISEN
TOMB

Psalms 118: 1-2 14-24



D	L	K	Z	L	P	P	L	C	R	H	H	R	Z	C	N	R	L	E	D
U	A	L	D	I	W	Q	H	D	Q	E	N	T	D	G	L	W	D	H	C
B	Y	Y	C	F	V	L	S	U	O	E	T	H	G	I	R	O	B	Z	I
Y	T	L	G	M	T	W	R	B	Y	T	X	J	Y	N	M	R	V	J	W
W	D	R	B	P	S	O	O	B	T	V	N	G	B	W	E	Z	I	E	D
C	V	W	F	L	O	S	D	D	P	M	A	C	V	L	R	R	O	K	E
S	J	E	D	E	N	E	T	S	A	H	C	R	X	R	Q	U	T	F	T
A	T	E	N	D	G	T	X	O	L	D	W	C	C	L	R	J	I	S	L
L	R	E	O	W	L	G	T	J	J	G	L	X	C	H	H	K	S	B	A
V	V	G	O	T	Q	R	E	C	O	U	N	T	Y	Y	C	U	R	C	X
A	V	H	Q	S	I	S	Y	A	X	D	V	T	U	R	V	A	A	M	E
T	A	G	B	A	P	H	O	X	T	E	Y	P	S	B	T	D	E	J	Q
I	L	D	A	F	L	B	U	E	Z	I	N	T	N	M	K	T	L	H	W
O	I	I	F	D	F	E	V	I	G	M	A	D	N	T	S	H	U	J	Q
N	A	N	A	A	U	F	O	I	D	P	D	R	U	F	V	A	R	I	T
N	N	F	O	E	G	C	R	V	C	V	C	R	E	R	N	N	I	Q	K
J	T	N	C	T	R	L	G	T	V	T	N	T	X	Q	E	K	V	S	L
Q	L	I	Y	S	S	I	F	F	P	U	O	O	V	U	N	S	S	S	T
G	Y	N	H	N	J	T	D	O	Y	M	P	R	N	L	O	W	V	A	O
F	I	N	G	S	A	M	S	I	K	G	D	A	Y	E	W	H	G	T	O

- CHASTENED
- ENDURES
- EXALTED
- GIVE
- ISRAEL
- LOVE
- RECOUNT
- RIGHTEOUS
- SALVATION
- SONG
- STEADFAST
- STRENGTH
- THANKS
- VALIANTLY
- VICTORY