

# Grace Devotion

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Week of April 5, 2026

Greetings, dear friends,

We have journeyed together through Lent, learning to see ourselves, our neighbors, and God more clearly. Now, as we celebrate Christ's resurrection and new life, I wanted to share my Easter sermon with you. I hope it brings you comfort, hope, and a reminder that you are never alone this Easter season.

Peace and Blessings,

Pastor Amy

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SERMON: John 20:1-18

Easter morning reminds us that sometimes God is already bringing new life into the world before we are able to see it.

## "Eyes Opened"

Early, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene made her way to the tomb. Can you imagine what that walk was like? It must have been quiet—the kind of heavy quiet that comes after a long and painful week. I imagine it was the kind of walk where you suddenly realize the world is still moving along... while inside your own heart everything has stopped. Mary is traveling to the tomb, never expecting a miracle. She goes because that is what love does. When someone we love dies, we return to the places where we find their memory. We show up even though it hurts so much. As she walks, she knows what she expects to see when she arrives: the stone in place, the silence of death, a finite ending. Mary had watched Jesus die. She had stood near the cross. She had seen the suffering and had heard Jesus's final breath. When she set out that morning, it was never an expectation of resurrection. She came carrying grief. When she arrived, something was wrong. The stone had been rolled away and the tomb lay open. Instead of closure, there was only confusion. She ran to tell Peter and the other disciple. They came running, looked inside and saw the linen cloths lying there. They turned around and went home for while they did not yet understand the scripture, they believed. But...Mary stayed. She stood outside the tomb weeping. Maybe that very moment feels familiar to us. Sometimes when everything feels uncertain, when the losses we bear feel so fresh, we find ourselves wanting to stay close to the places where love once was. We find ourselves lingering there, not because we think that answers will come, but because we don't know where else to go.

Mary bends down and looks into the tomb again and she sees two angels where Jesus's body had lain. They ask her a simple question, but one that bears so much weight, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She answers honestly, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." She turns around and Jesus is standing there...right there...but she does not recognize him. She thinks he is the gardener. The risen Christ is right there in front of her and she cannot see him...yet. Resurrection doesn't erase the wounds of Friday, or the confusion of Saturday. Instead, it shows us something about the very heart of God. God doesn't stay far from us in our grief. In Christ, God is standing right beside us, even when we can't recognize that God is there. God is with us in the valleys...always.

Perhaps that very moment tells us something about our own journey that we have been on together this Lenten season. For weeks now, we have been reflecting on what it means to "learn to see". On Ash Wednesday, we began by seeing our own limits truthfully remembering that we are dust, fragile and human, and deeply loved by God. Then, we stepped into the wilderness with Jesus to ask what truly sustains us. We listened to Nicodemus in the night, wrestling with his faith that asks us to let go of what we think we fully understand. We stood at the well with a Samaritan woman and watched what happened when someone who has been overlooked is finally seen. We heard the story of the man who was born blind and we were reminded that new sight can sometimes challenge what we thought we already understood. Just last week, we stood outside of another tomb—this time with Martha and Mary, learning to see hope, even in the waiting. Again and again, throughout this season, the invitation has been the same: Open our eyes. Learn to see more clearly.

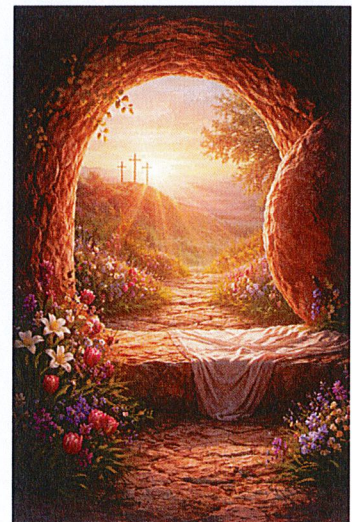
But, my friends, seeing clearly is not always easy. Sometimes grief clouds our vision. Sometimes fear blinds us. Sometimes disappointment makes it hard to imagine that anything new could be possible. Mary came to the tomb expecting death. So, when life was standing right in front of her, she could not yet recognize it. The journey to seeing clearly is a long one. But then...Jesus speaks. Just. One. Word. "Mary." Her name. Suddenly, everything changes. She hears his voice and in that moment she sees. "Rabboni!" she says. Teacher. The most powerful part of this moment is that Jesus had been there all along. Mary simply was unable to see him. Sometimes resurrection works that way. It doesn't always arrive with dramatic signs or loud announcements. Oh so often, it unfolds quietly and gently until one small moment changes the way we see things so significantly.

Maybe you have experienced moments like this in your own life. Maybe it was time when something felt completely and utterly lost, and then a small opening slowly appeared. Maybe it was a relationship that began to heal. Maybe it was a grief that softened just enough to allow you see a glimpse of hope...and joy again. So often, we don't recognize these moments right away. In the moment, we are lost in our own space. But when we look back, we realize that new life had already begun.

I've always loved the part of this scripture where Mary thinks that Jesus is the gardener. Maybe it is because I relate to the gardening part—I am truly alive when my hands and feet are in dirt. Maybe it is because gardeners understand something intimate and important about life. They plant seeds in the dark. They wait patiently. They trust that something new is growing even though they can only see the plain dirt above. Maybe that same image tells us something about what God is always doing here. God is tending the garden of this world. From the beginning of scripture, God is portrayed as a gardener—planting new life, shaping creation, and bringing chaos into order. On Easter morning, in a garden near an empty tomb, God begins that work again. The resurrection is not only the raising of Jesus; it is the beginning of a new creation where death does not have the final word. God is bringing life out of places that once seemed dried and barren. God is growing hope where we also expected only endings. This is what Easter shows us. The story is not over. God is always bringing new life—even in places where we had stopped looking for it. Mary came to the tomb expecting grief. Instead, she heard her name spoken aloud by the one she loved so dearly. In that moment, her eyes were opened. She saw life standing before her. Once she saw, everything changed. Jesus tells her, “Go and tell”. Mary becomes the first to witness the resurrection. She goes to the others and says, “I have seen the Lord.”

My friends, I hope that this is where our Lenten journey leads us today. For weeks we have been learning to see—Now, on this Easter morning, we are invited to see one more thing. Life. Not only the life that burst from the tomb long ago, but the life that God is still bringing into our world right now. Because Easter is not only about something that happened in the past. It is about learning to recognize resurrection in the present—in quiet acts of love, in courage that rises after heartbreak, in communities that unite together for one another, in hope that refuses to disappear. Mary came expecting an ending but instead she discovered life. This morning God invites us to look again—to see with new eyes. Let us notice where resurrection is already happening in our lives. May we open our eyes and see Christ in our midst. May that vision change how we live and love...as we carry the hope of Easter out into the world. Amen

Gracious and Loving God, We come today to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ but also to hold space for the journey of Holy Week we've walked together. The grief of Friday's crucifixion holds its own place as we celebrate the joy of today. Be with each of us when we are in the valleys of our lives, reminding us that we never walk life's journey alone. Be with us when we experience the resurrection in our own lives—let us offer praise and thanks. Open our hearts and our eyes to see more clearly. In Christ's name, the risen one, Amen



**April 5, 2026**  
**Easter Sunday**

Prayer of Confession/Silent Reflection/Assurance of Grace

Welcome/Announcements

Joys and Concerns  
Praying for Others  
Lord's Prayer

\*\* ° Hymn: "Were You There" #181

Westminster Chimes and Prelude

Celebration of Our Gifts  
\*\* Offertory Response: "Doxology" #625  
\*\* Prayer of Dedication

\*\*° Hymn: "Christ the Lord is Risen Today" #217

Grace Choir Anthem: "He Is Up and Gone"

\*\* Call to Worship  
Lector: Christ is risen!

**Congregation: Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

Lector: The tomb is empty!

**Congregation: Alleluia! Life is here!**

Lector: Give thanks to the Lord, for God is good.

**Congregation: God's steadfast love endures forever!**

Lector: This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!

**Congregation: Alleluia! Christ calls each of us by name. Let us live in resurrection joy!**

Scripture Reading:  
**John 11:20:1-18**

Time for the Young at Heart

Message: "Eyes Opened"

Holy Communion

\*\*Prayer of Thanksgiving

**Gracious God, Alleluia!**

**Thank You for meeting us at this table. Thank You for Jesus, who shows us new life, calls us by name, and fills our hearts with hope. Help us go forth with our eyes opened and our hands ready to share Your love. Amen.**

\*\* Opening Prayer: (pray silently or aloud)  
**God of New Life, You have walked with us through the shadows of Lent, teaching us to see Your love in unexpected places. This Easter morning, open our eyes to the life You bring from death. Open our eyes to the hope You raise from despair and open our eyes to the joy You pour into our hearts! Christ is risen! Amen**

\*\*° Hymn: "Crown Him with Many Crowns" #234

\*\* Final Blessing  
\*\* "A Choral Benediction"

Postlude

\*\* Sharing the Peace of Christ

\*\* Please stand, if you are able.

+ Black contemporary folder ° Blue hymnal

\*\*° Hymn: "He Lives" #220

## Announcements

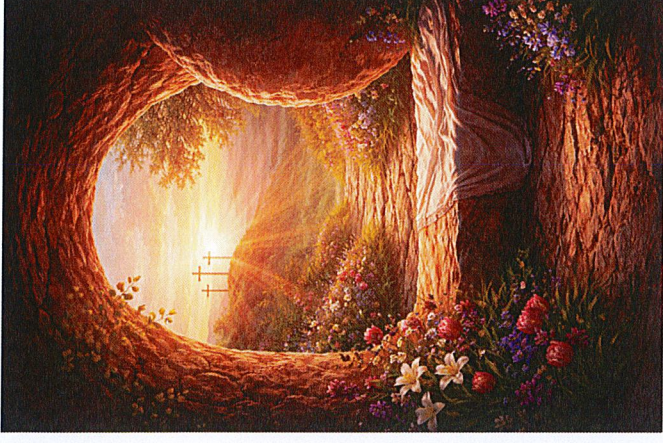
- Sign up to get your picture taken for the new church directory – call the church office to get a time slot.
- Contact the church office or Leslie Grote for more information about our new widower's group that will meet monthly.
- Thank you Grace UCC Choir for the special music today

## Upcoming Events

- Bible Study Group & Movie – April 8<sup>th</sup> @ 12:30 PM
- Women's Ministry Zoom – April 8<sup>th</sup> @ 7:30 PM
- Monthly Movie – April 10<sup>th</sup> @ 3:00 PM
- Second Saturday – April 11<sup>th</sup> @ 1:00 PM
- PAL – Grace UCC Helpers – April 18<sup>th</sup> @ 9:00 AM
- Women's Ministry, In Person – April 22<sup>nd</sup> @ 7:30 PM
- Mark your calendars for the Grace Parking Lot Yard Sale on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. More details to come

## Upcoming Meetings

- Personnel Committee Meeting – April 6<sup>th</sup> @ 3:45 PM
- Consistory Meeting – April 13<sup>th</sup> @ 6:00 PM
- Worship & Music – April 27<sup>th</sup> @ 4:45 PM
- Faith Formation – April 27<sup>th</sup> @ 6:00 PM



Grace United Church of Christ

100 Fourth Street  
Hanover, Pennsylvania 17331  
717-632-1146

Prayer Line: 717-632-1146 LINE 3

**Thank you for today's Worship Leaders:**

Pastor - Amy Fawks

Lector – Jenn Weaver

Organist and Music Director - Christian Keller

Head Usher – Jenn Weaver & Craig Bixler

## John 11

J R B K J S Z N M I X R E R U B U P L A T O F S E I I P B  
 D P E C D T S Q A F V T R X S G N I H T Q A X Y T M Q E Z  
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 T E N E J K T A W O D A O C A H C E E E S E T S F L T V I  
 G J C A T U K P R T K D Y I X E W I V P B L H U I T K F J  
 N I S A B H E Z H O L X W S T W A E K K T M Q E N H J K Y  
 R D M G L E O E L W S R O F H C I D O D O E T H Z L T M L  
 V E T V L P R S O Q Z E R I E L E W U I E Y F M R H M E U  
 X T T S Q E L N Z A R O C R E H I R D J N O A Q D E P C D  
 O I Q S F M K X C H M H E B B F W D R A D C M G J C D A J  
 S C T O I G Z S G F H H Q D K D W I H U S E W A A O U R E  
 A M R B R S T A M J W N I G H T O T E U S F V N N I N M S  
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| • SAYING   | • KNOW         | • PLACE      |
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| • LOVED    | • SAITH        | • SPOKEN     |
| • HEARD    | • RESURRECTION | • THAT       |
| • JUDAEA   | • LIVETH       | • WHICH      |
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| • THINGS   | • INTO         | • PRIEST     |
| • SLEEP    | • WEEP         | • EXPEDIENT  |
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| • DEAD     | • WEEPING      | • WERE       |
| • BELIEVE  | • WHERE        | • FROM       |
| • SAID     | • WEPT         | • WILDERNESS |
| • DAYS     | • BEHOLD       | • THEMSELVES |
| • BETHANY  | • HAVE         | • THINK      |
| • MANY     | • THEREFORE    | • BOTH       |

# Easter Word Search

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



DAFFODILS  
 EGG  
 JELLYBEANS  
 RABBIT  
 CHOCOLATE

LAMBS  
 IRIS  
 BASKET  
 CHICKS  
 HUNT

