

# Jesus Dies on a Cross

## Purpose

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To recall the unprecedented sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

## Hearing the Word

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The Scripture for this lesson is printed below.

### Mark 15:22-39 (NIV)

22 They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”).

23 Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it.

24 And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get.

25 It was nine in the morning when they crucified him.

26 The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS.

27 They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left.

28 It is written: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors...’

29 Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, “So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days,

30 come down from the cross and save yourself!”

31 In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself!

32 Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.” Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

33 At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

34 And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried

out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).

35 When some of those standing near heard this, they said, “Listen, he’s calling Elijah.”

36 Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said.

37 With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

38 The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

39 And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”

### Mark 15:22-39 (KJV)

22 And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull.

23 And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.

24 And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.

25 And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.

26 And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

27 And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.

28 And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

29 And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days,

30 Save thyself, and come down from the cross.

31 Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save.

32 Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.

33 And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?

which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

35 And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias.

36 And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.

37 And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

38 And the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

39 And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

## DAILY BIBLE STUDY

March 30	Psalms 22:1-11
March 31	Psalms 22:12-18
April 1	Hebrews 9:1-12
April 2	Mark 15:22-32
April 3	Mark 15:33-37
April 4	Mark 15:38-41
April 5	John 19:31-37

### Seeing the Need

I have always loved Palm Sunday! The hymns are so happy, and worshipers celebrate Jesus as the one who comes in the

name of the Lord. I imagine the patchwork quilt of coats laid on the street as he entered Jerusalem that day, carefully placed so that not even the hooves of the donkey that carried Jesus would touch the ground.

One year when I was a child, we received a special gift on Palm Sunday at church. Someone had taken palm branches, cut them into little strips, and then stapled them together in the form of a cross. We each got one as we went in for worship. It was the first time I remember feeling the conflict between Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday or remembering the death of Jesus on the cross.

As I held the pieces of palm fronds, I could feel, right in the center, the hard, sharp edges of the staple that held the fronds together. It felt for me like the sharp edges of the nails that held the crucified Jesus to the cross. In the midst of that grand celebration of the procession of palms, I held the symbol of what would come to be the saddest day of the year. I

grew up a little bit that day.

As you reread the Passion story, do so a bit more slowly than usual. Try to recreate in your own mind the events on the day Jesus died. Doing so can help us come to a deeper gratitude for what the Son of God endured for our eternal sake and life.

### **A Matter of Fact**

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One of my hobbies is to explore my family history. I've made connections to the Mayflower and even to King Charlemagne (mostly for boasting rights!), but the more fascinating parts have come as I've discovered various death certificates of my long-lost family members.

They are stark in their descriptions, usually simply stating the date of death, the location, and the specific time. They also usually state the cause of death: cancer, cancer of the stomach, heart attack/stroke, pleurisy, brain disease, or old age. Quite a few relatives were killed in battle. There are lots of ways we can die, aren't there? My extended family seems to represent a wide variety. However, nowhere do we find "died by crucifixion" as a cause of death.

Mark's way of writing his Gospel involved wasting no words. He almost seems to have been in a hurry to record only essential details. He didn't create any flowery illustrations or images. For example, read Mark 15:24, which bluntly states, "They crucified him." Simply horrible but plainspoken, just as it was to read of the process by which the soldiers determined who would get the only things left that Jesus owned: "They divided up his clothes, drawing lots for them to determine who would take what."

Jesus had been taken to Golgotha (verse 22) outside the city walls, most likely close to where the burial site was located. The word Golgotha comes from the Aramaic, *gulgulta*, which, as the Bible states, literally means "the place of the skull." Some scholars say that the actual location somehow looked like a skull, but others simply connect it as a place of death. The word Calvary comes from the Latin *calva*, which means bald head, or skull. Different languages but the same essential meaning.

The Romans had a passion for maintaining order and did so through a wide variety of execution methods. Beheading, stabbing, strangling, stoning, burning alive, and worse were all in the repertoire of the Roman executioners. Only they, however, would use the tool of crucifixion, and they used it as a political weapon. One could be crucified, not for stealing or adultery, but for sedition, which was the attempt to overthrow the government.

Some believe that the two men crucified with Jesus (verse 27; "thieves," King James Version; "bandits," NRSV) were "outlaws" (CEB) or "rebels" (NIV) against the government since there were dozens of rebellious groups in Palestine at the time. Even though the high priest believed Jesus should be executed for blasphemy, Rome didn't care. It wasn't their religion. However, they did agree to crucify Jesus for committing a civil crime, of making statements and promoting the belief that he indeed was King of the Jews and a civil threat to Roman power.

However we might interpret the reasons for his execution, there is no doubt of the humiliation, pain, and agony that Jesus experienced that day. Imagine the incredi-

ble sacrifice he gave himself over to experience. For us as followers of Christ, we believe this act of self-giving, as horrible a way as it was for Jesus to die, brought eternal life and salvation to this world.

As you think about the plain, simple facts of Jesus' crucifixion, what does it mean to you personally to know he died for you? What is the best way for you to respond to Jesus' death on a cross?

### **My God, My God!**

When our two sons were growing up, Cheri and I often took them on hikes through various areas of the Black Hills of South Dakota. One day, we decided to hike to the top of Bear Butte, an ancient mountain-like formation.

It was a long walk uphill. By the time we reached the top, we were a bit winded. On the way down, Adam, seven years old at the time, was curious about everything. "Dad," he asked, "do you think there are any rattlesnakes around here?" Without thinking, I responded, "I'm sure there are some." Before I finished the sentence, Adam transformed into a human pogo stick, jumping back and forth, hearing for certain a thousand rattles, ready to strike. He was terrified and could not get back to the car fast enough.

We all have been through times of fear and terror in our lives, and some of them were legitimate, even life-threatening. Keep in mind that fear is always a future-directed emotion. What might happen creates the fear, not what has happened or what is happening. Even if it is moments away, it's still in the future and undetermined.

Do you think Jesus felt fear on the cross that day? He knew he was going to die, but

he had never experienced death and only knew that pain and agony awaited him. It must have been terrifying. I think that's why he turned to Hebrew Scripture and recalled what he had learned as a boy: "My God, my God, why have you left me?" (Mark 15:34; also Psalm 22:1). Jesus recalled the words appearing in the psalm just preceding the one that states, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1, KJV).

Psalm 22 is a long psalm, with 31 verses in contrast to the six verses we find in Psalm 23. When we read it in its entirety, we discover that it is a song of agony and suffering. "I cry out during the day . . . even at nighttime I don't stop," the psalmist said (Psalm 22:2).

But the psalm does not end there. Beginning in verse 19 and through the rest of the psalm, we find praise of God and affirmation of trust in God's presence and care, even when things are horrible. This was the psalm Jesus offered as he hung from a cross. In his sacrifice, Jesus called out in pain and suffering. But just as surely as the psalmist's words, expressing feelings of abandonment, were part of his life and heart, so also were the words of affirmation and trust that followed.

How naturally do we employ that kind of faith when we are faced with times of agony, grief, and loss? Some of us have experienced incredible pain, and it perhaps makes us cry out, wondering why God has forsaken us. The circumstances themselves are painful enough, but that pain and suffering are multiplied by the sense that God has abandoned us, leaving us to try to endure it alone.

That's why investing the time and effort to grow in our faith is so critical. Studying

the Scriptures, spending time in prayer, nurturing our relationship with God, learning in community with others, and understanding more fully the gift Jesus is in our lives—all of these things combine to create a different posture from which we live. When things seem hopeless and without purpose, we can trust that God has indeed not forsaken us. Beyond the momentary feeling of loss, we know that God is with us in all things, and we are not alone.

That assurance comes when we take our Christian faith seriously and make the growth of our faith a core priority for our lives. Our faith is not simply an add-on to living a good life. It is the center of living during times of abundance and in times of suffering, because in all things, we do so with God's love.

How might you live in the upcoming Easter season that would give you the firm foundation for living a life of faith in the months to come?

### **The End of the Temple**

My dad died July 21, 1993. He died in the morning in the hospital after a fitful night flooded with morphine that was supposed to ease his pain and calm him. It didn't. Outwardly, Dad had been fine up until late spring that year. What eventually appeared to be cancer was insidious and difficult for the doctors to determine.

Dad's dying was a powerful and significant part of all of our lives, but his death created a new reality for the Cross family. As a retired lieutenant colonel in the Air Force, Dad was the squadron commander for our family. Mom certainly was a leader as well, but where she expressed her love through tenderness, reason, and conversation, Dad expressed his through order, rou-

tine, and a larger-than-life presence. When he was gone, it was as if pieces of his life and gifts were suddenly spread around to the rest of us.

Granted, oldest brother, Ray, thought he would simply take on the mantle, which is typical of firstborns, but it didn't turn out that way. We have survived and done pretty well, but we are different now. What was on that day in July, simply wasn't anymore. We often talk about "what used to be" and even laugh at the ways in which our family organization lived out its mission. But today, those days are done. It's not better or worse; it's just different.

Mark 15:37 uses the same stark simplicity we find throughout the rest of the Gospel: "But Jesus let out a loud cry and died." It was over. The life of the itinerant preacher and teacher from Galilee, who led and taught and healed and brought a new understanding of the kingdom of God, was gone. Even before Resurrection three days later, the world changed. The sacrifice of the Son of God was complete; and the world, although it didn't know it quite yet, was offered a new way of living and existing, as the sin of the world had been also carried into death and destroyed forever.

In the Temple, "the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom" (verse 38). Some traditions hold that the Temple curtain was 60 feet tall, four inches thick, and made of blue, purple, and scarlet fine linen. Where Jerusalem was the heart of Jewish life and the Temple the heart of Jerusalem, the Holy of Holies was believed to be the earthly dwelling place of God. Only the high priest could enter there, and then only on occasion, to offer the sin offering on behalf of the people. Because of sin, the people were symbolically and lit-

erally kept apart from God.

On that Friday, Jesus' sacrifice became the once-and-for-all sin sacrifice, and it also meant for Christians that the Holy of Holies no longer need keep us away from God, nor would the Temple be needed as the symbol of the old covenant. With the tearing of the curtain, the new covenant with Jesus Christ was ushered into the world.

In one sense as we read this Scripture, we may be struck in awe over the incredible sacrifice of Jesus. In another sense, we can see that the sacrifice also changed the world forever. Also notice that the change in everything was not by human effort. This was done by God's hand. Some imaginative writers have suggested that the curtain was torn from the inside of the Holy of Holies, as God tore the barrier between where God was believed to have dwelt and the entire world outside of that place.

We celebrate and affirm that the work of Good Friday, although physically done by the hands of Roman executioners, was accomplished by the grace of God, who has freed and reclaimed this world through the gift of God's Son. We know that this time next week, we will celebrate a different reality and experience as we will rejoice in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Let's not, however, miss the solemn opportunity to rejoice in this week's powerful and loving gift of God. Nothing we have done has enabled this to happen, but certainly everything we do can be known as a grateful response for the gracious gift of God through Christ.

What is your own response to God as you have considered the events recorded in this Scripture?

Gracious and loving God, grant me today the powerful understanding of your love for me, given through Jesus; in Jesus' name. Amen.

# Jesus' Resurrection

## Purpose

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To experience the “fear and excitement” of Resurrection.

## Hearing the Word

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The Scripture for this lesson is printed below.

### Matthew 28:1-10 (NIV)

1 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.

3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow.

4 The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

5 The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.

6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay.

7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”

8 So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

9 Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshipped him.

10 Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

### Matthew 28:1-10 (KJV)

1 In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

4 And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

5 And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

6 He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

7 And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.

8 And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.

9 And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

10 Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

## DAILY BIBLE STUDY

April 6	Psalm 118:1-9, 14-18
April 7	Matthew 27:57-61
April 8	Matthew 27:62-66
April 9	Matthew 28:1-10
April 10	Matthew 28:11-15
April 11	John 20:19-23
April 12	Revelation 1:13-18

### Seeing the Need

Candy, baskets, new clothes, a great meal, and hymns of triumph and celebration. Did I hear trumpets playing? I should, because today is a day unlike any other in our year. It is Resurrection Day!

One year when our family was living in South Carolina on an Air Force base, the Easter sunrise service was held on the tarmac where the planes landed and were kept. Parents brought their bleary-eyed children out into the dewy, almost chilly early spring pre-dawn; and we all stumbled our way across the grass and found our way to the cold folding chairs. No lights were lit. Only darkness.

After what seemed to be an awfully long wait, as we looked east, we saw the sun come up over the horizon. Nothing stood in the way of the sunrise, but soon

we realized that a large object had been placed before us. As the sun continued to break through and light the new morning, everyone's eyes opened wide. Gasps rippled through the congregation. In front us, life-sized and covered with lilies, vines, and everything beautiful was an empty cross.

Nine years old at the time, I don't remember a thing the chaplain said, nor any part of the service, but I will never forget the incredible sight of the cross at sunrise on Easter morning. It spoke to me, and still does, more deeply than words, filling me not so much with fear but with excitement and awe. This is what the angels proclaimed. This is what God promised.

Resurrection is something we can claim and experience in our own lives, especially on this first day of the week. As you reread the Scripture of this miraculous morning, my hope is that you will once again experience this for your life and find the joy of this day in the company of Christian brothers and sisters. Let's celebrate!

### Nothing New

Cheri is a women's health nurse practitioner, and she sees dozens of expectant mothers each year. She is amazed at how many couples seem to believe that the child to be born to them will be unlike any other and that no family in history has or will experience what they are experiencing. Not to mention, the child will be the most handsome or beautiful and most talented and intelligent—far above average! When she tells me that, we just smile, because we know that our two sons were the most hand-

some and intelligent and talented children ever created.

Even though humans have the ability and desire to believe that our lives are singularly unique and our experiences are unlike any one else's (the truest love, the most important work, the best grandchildren), when we stop and think for a moment or two, it's humbling to realize that there is nothing new. Granted, there are still things that are special and dramatic, and they catch our eye and attention; but in terms of "totally new," we are varieties of the same theme, the same human joys and sadness and successes and tragedies. Yes, in one sense, we are all unique, but we are all unique together.

Today's Scripture holds the unique story upon which we Christians build our faith, God's miraculous act on Easter morning. Resurrection means "raising from the dead." It comes from the Latin *resurgere*, to "resurge" or "to rise." We know of other instances in Scripture when persons were brought back to life, including by Jesus' hands.

Lazarus is perhaps the most well-known case, as Jesus called him back to life from the tomb. Many Bible scholars say that Lazarus was resuscitated, brought back to life by Jesus' act, whereas Jesus was raised to life as a new creation. In doing so, he opened the gates for each of us to experience life that is eternal in nature (2 Corinthians 5:17).

When Lazarus was brought back to life, he eventually died again. When Jesus was resurrected, he was then raised to heaven and lives now eternally at God's right hand. Jesus is the one who has brought not simply a more

abundant life but also eternal life for you and me.

What difference does it make that Jesus has been resurrected by God's power and lives today?

### Fear

As a staff member of the Dakotas Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church and serving as a superintendent for 19 years, I have managed to wear out four and a half cars with all the driving I've had to do. With nearly 145,000 square miles in the two states, my tires have become acquainted with plenty of interstates, highways, and little back roads. In all these years, I have never had an accident nor hit a deer, moose, or other such animal, although I have had to replace a few windshields due to rocks and the occasional pheasant.

One thing I have decided is that I hate to drive long distances after dark. In fact, I have prayed when I've had to drive at night that God would protect the sweet creatures that roam at night and keep them in the ditches or the fields or the forests rather than on the roads. I believe in prayer. I also believe in prayer when filled with fear. Besides breaking my car, it would also break my heart to hit and hurt one of those beautiful creatures.

As we noted in an earlier lesson, fear is always based on a future event. What may happen is what seizes us. Fear is also based on the pure unknown. When we come up against something so strange that we have never before known about or experienced, fear is a totally legitimate emotion.

In today's Scripture, it's not a matter

of deer in the headlights but instead a matter of experiencing the power of God in a way never seen before. Following Jesus' death and burial, Pilate and the chief priests posted guards at Jesus' tomb (Matthew 27:62-66), which already had "a large stone" at its door (verse 60). They further secured the entrance to the tomb by "sealing the stone" (verse 66), almost, it seems, to make sure Jesus stayed dead. But God was involved. A little something like a boulder was no match for the incomparable power of God.

"There was a great earthquake," Matthew tells us, and "an angel from the Lord came down from heaven. Coming to the stone, he rolled it away and sat on it" (Matthew 28:2-3). It was almost as if God were saying, "This is all you have?" With a glimpse into the glory of God, the angel's shining face and clothes dropped the guards of the tomb into terror and left them shaking and acting like dead men. Quite a sight and quite an experience! I imagine I'd be right there with them, shaking, quaking, and dropping at the vision of such a holy, powerful moment.

Isn't it interesting that the first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection were Roman guards? Neither these important soldiers--instilled with the power of Rome and with official authority to maintain order--nor a closed and sealed tomb were any match for the power of God. In the face of God's might and glory, all of the human, puffed-up, and oh-so-very-important actions of Rome were set aside, as though they were of no consequence at all. All that was left was for the soldiers to experience fear in the face of holiness, as their work came

to a sudden end.

However, it's more than opening a tomb that can elicit fear. "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the tomb," Matthew says (verse 1). Instead of encountering what they thought they would see, they also witnessed God's power and glory, as well as the terrified guards. They also had a conversation of sorts with an angel, certainly not your typical Sunday morning activity.

The angel must have known what his appearance looked like, because his first words were words of good news: "Don't be afraid" (verse 5). It's okay, he reassured them. You are looking for a dead body? He's not here, because he has been raised by the very hand of God to new life! He'll meet you in Galilee. You can meet him there.

How might we have responded to meeting an angel and hearing such incredible, remarkable, almost unbelievable words? I'd be scared, even if the angel told me not to be! The women experienced great fear for all of the right reasons that morning; but as we will see, that wasn't the last thing they experienced, was it?

As you place yourself into this Gospel story, what might your first reaction have been?

### **Excitement**

Like me, you've probably experienced times when fear and excitement ran hand in hand before you. Perhaps it felt as if your heart leaped out of your throat, and you were so happy and so terrified at the same time.

I remember the first time I held

Cheri's hand as we walked in the snow behind her parents' farmhouse. I remember each time we discovered we were going to be parents. The fear and the excitement of those events and others were so closely matched together, almost like breathing out and breathing in. The exhale was the fear, the inhale was the excitement, as I was filled with hope and expectation and still had to gasp a little at being uncertain about this future that came crashing down on me.

Verse 8 of today's Scripture seems to capture that feeling: "With great fear and excitement, they hurried away from the tomb and ran to tell his disciples." The women were overwhelmed by what the news might mean, but at the same time, they were filled with incredible energy and the power to "summon forth" or "call out," which is the original meaning of excite. They almost couldn't stop themselves, because they were excited to tell the disciples what they had heard!

Isn't that the case with you? When you have heard or experienced something amazing or life-changing, don't you quickly call someone or maybe take a picture on your phone and then text it to all of your friends?

You may remember, like me, waking up in the middle of the night as a child. The shadows seemed to be active, and the house creaked, and our first instinct was to run to those persons who could help take the fear away. It was something to get rid of, and we found that relief in the arms of someone bigger and safer than the danger of the night. The fear that claims us is best shared with others who have the power to remove it from behind our hearts, where it seems

to sit.

Excitement, though, is so far different, which makes it amazing that the women would have felt both emotions so close together. When we are excited, we will talk with a server in the restaurant or a stranger in line or almost anyone, not to take the excitement away, but in a strange way, to grow the excitement by having others join us in joy. The women hurried with excitement, because they couldn't wait to tell the disciples! We consider the women to be the first evangelists of the Christian faith, because hearing the incredible news, their only goal was to share it with others.

They were stopped for a moment, though. They were stopped by an even greater moment, as they encountered the risen Jesus, who greeted them on Resurrection morning. All the women could do was grab his feet and worship him. Jesus' response was just what they needed: "Don't be afraid. Go and tell my brothers that I am going into Galilee. They will see me there" (verse 10).

Imagine the meeting between the women and the disciples, their emotions ranging from disbelief to fear to excitement. The news changed their entire world. Joy replaced sadness, and excitement overwhelmed the fear they faced when Jesus was crucified.

What is your reaction this Resurrection morning? The ancient greeting for this day that we still repeat is "Christ is risen!" thus announcing the good news and sharing the excitement. And the response is, "He is risen indeed!" affirming this life-altering, world-changing news.

At least one dictionary records over

125 languages and cultures that offer this greeting on Easter. All of them use exclamation points. These words bring the power of the Resurrection into our midst: Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! That's not something to shrug off!

May we offer that greeting today with joyful voices, calling out the power of God's grace and love by offering the affirmation of the Risen Christ in our midst. Easter should change us, and not only for the day, or because we wear a new dress or shirt. Easter has the ability to transform us from living day-to-day

with a component of fear to becoming persons who are filled with God's Spirit, excited for the present life and the eternal life ahead. Thanks be to God and the risen Christ!

Who needs to hear from you, with affirmation and joy, that Christ is risen indeed?

God of resurrection, fill my heart with the promise and proof of your Son in my life, and show me the opportunities I have to give the gift of Jesus to another today; in Jesus' name. Amen.