

4.5.2026 Easter Day

Pastor Timothy McKenzie

Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Colossians 3:1-4; Matthew 28:1-10

“Go and tell – He is risen”

*Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Alleluia! Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia! Blessed Easter greetings to you all. May our risen Lord, Christ Jesus, live in your hearts each day, that you might live for Christ and for your neighbor. Amen.

Today, with churches around the world in every nation and language, we celebrate with thanksgiving the new life we share in Christ Jesus. Look around you today; it is really a miracle that we are gathered here in this place. People of different nations, backgrounds, ethnicities, genders, identities, and abilities. In our very fractured world, Easter morning is a reminder that in Christ, God welcomes every people, anyone who calls upon his name.

In today’s reading from Acts, Peter speaks to Cornelius and his household. Cornelius was a Roman citizen, a centurion of the Italian Regiment and a gentile. Peter declares to Cornelius and his household the good news of Easter that all people are welcome God’s sight, saying, *“I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every people, anyone who fears him and practices righteousness is acceptable to him.”* Peter’s words open the fellowship of the church to anyone who loves and worships God in Jesus Christ.

We are gathered this morning, not because of our nation or ethnicity, but because of the impartiality of God’s love that welcomes us all no matter who we are or how we are. It is impossible to overstate the importance of this Easter faith: the Christian church is a church of all nations and people who believe in the risen Lord. We are neither an ethnic nor a national church. We are a global church. On Easter morning, we give thanks that Jesus has opened the way to everlasting life for all nations and peoples – this is good news in a world that remains sadly in the grip of hatred, division, and war.

On the first Easter morning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb of Jesus. We can only imagine their sadness – their teacher and friend had been killed. They certainly did not go to the tomb anticipating anything like resurrection. Perhaps they went to console one another and to recall good memories of their teacher, Jesus, while he lived.

Yet the earth shook and a messenger of the Lord rolled the stone away, and said to them, *“Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised.”* Like them, we are confronted on Easter morning by a sheer impossibility, for it is certain: Jesus died, the grave had been sealed, and Roman guards placed on duty so no one could steal the body. How utterly fantastic the news, *“He is not here, for he*

*has been raised.*” Both Marys saw the empty tomb and were told, “*go quickly and tell his disciples,*” he has been raised, and he will meet you in Galilee.

As they departed, they were met by the risen Jesus, who said, “*Do not be afraid; go and tell by brothers and sisters to go to Galilee; there they will see me.*” The single mind-bending assertion of those who first believed is more than simply an empty tomb, it is that God has raised Jesus from the dead. This is the Easter faith that continues to overcome doubt, living in the hearts of people around the world.

The words, “*Do not be afraid,*” are words acknowledging our thoughts and feelings at the sheer implausibility of the resurrection. The ancient witnesses in today’s readings ask us to believe something that transcends our rationality. The words, “*Do not be afraid,*” encourage us to stand before a new reality so fantastic that we could be forgiven for remaining skeptical. Yet the faith that burns in our hearts confirms the presence of Jesus Christ raised and alive in every heart open to him. If only everyone in the world could know God’s love in Jesus Christ!

In the reading from Colossians, Paul writes, “*So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*” Setting our minds on the things that are above is not a flight from reality; it is not wishful thinking; rather, the things that are above liberate us from the ongoing divisions, pain, and suffering of this world. Setting our minds on Christ, we look at the world in a new way – with the “resurrection eyes” of Jesus. We envision the world and God’s love for this world with the eyes of Jesus.

Yet tragically, many still look upon the world, not with the eyes of Christ, but with the eyes of hatred, violence, and war. Not setting their minds upon Christ, many do not seek the things that are above. Many continue the “old order” and old ways of the world, separating people because of the color of their skin, their nation, ethnicity, gender identity, and ability. Easter makes it abundantly clear that to call oneself a Christian means looking to the things above – where Christ is. It means looking at people with the “resurrection eyes” of Jesus, who sees only brothers and sisters.

To be a Christian means that our old ways of looking at the world have been overcome *by a love so great* – a God who shows no partiality. Jesus calls us all brothers and sisters and will dwell in you if you but call upon his name.

The true miracle of Easter is that two millennia later, we continue to believe and celebrate that God forgives our sin and helps us to live for Christ and for our neighbor. The Christian church is the oldest continuous global community in the world and the diversity of Christ’s body around the world reveals the truth that God shows no partiality but welcomes all people who call upon him.

I lived much of my adult life in the global reality of the church in another nation and language for almost 30 years; I know that some of you also began your journey in another nation or language; and I know that all of you look at the world differently because of Christ's love for you. Today, God has gathered us to give thanks for the Easter miracle that Christ lives raised and that God shows no partiality but welcomes all who call upon him, for we are all brothers and sisters in the eyes of Christ.

Yet my Easter joy is also tempered by the sad reality of war in the Middle East, in Ukraine, and in conflicts around the world. I am saddened by the ongoing assertion that people must remain separated by religion, ideology, and nationalisms. Yet I also remember that the first Easter morning occurred in a world under Roman occupation, a world of empire and brutal violence, and this same Easter faith has outlived empires and has changed the world, and will continue to transform the world because of people like you – who set their minds on Christ, seeking the things that are above.

As Easter people, we look at the world differently. We no longer see impossible boundaries and borders separating people; rather, with the eyes of Jesus, we see one human family, sisters and brothers all loved by God.

As Jesus told the two Marys, "Go and tell!" Go and tell all whom you meet, that Jesus is risen. Go and tell others through all that you do – that Jesus was raised for all people. Happy Easter. Amen.