



SERMONS  
THAT WORK



# SERMONS FOR

## *Holy Week and Easter 2025*

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An offering of  
Sermons That Work

THE *Episcopal* CHURCH 

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## Holy Week 2025

Dear Reader,

Thank you for downloading Sermons for Holy Week and Easter 2025, a collection of materials prepared by some of the best preachers from across The Episcopal Church. Sermons That Work, a ministry of The Episcopal Church's Office of Communication, has provided free and high-quality sermons, Bible studies, and bulletin inserts since 1995. Every week, it is our pleasure to source, review, and publish these pieces; we hope they are edifying as you hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest these and their corresponding Scriptures.

So—how has your Lent been? If you're reading this in preparation for Palm Sunday, you've had several weeks to put together a holy Lent. Have you examined your life? Repented? Prayed, fasted, and denied yourself? Have you read and meditated on God's holy Word? If you're the kind of person who eagerly downloads a booklet of sermons, perhaps you've done all of this in spades. And if, like me, you're a human being, I would bet you've fallen at least a bit short of your intentions this season. Whatever the situation, I hope your Lent has been holy and that you will keep this idea in mind: I hope the music and the readings, the ash and palms and lilies, your friends and family and congregation, your prayer and fasting and self-denial, have and will continue to point you toward Christ.

The celebrations of Holy Week and Easter are not just neat traditions that help us mark our days; they are invitations to situate ourselves in the grand narrative of history that is going on around us, even now. They are bold proclamations, wherever we find ourselves, that Jesus Christ is Lord and that his love, the love that laid the foundations of the Earth, is stronger than wildfires and floods, than rage and disappointment, even than death. These days are symbols and experiences that show us reality and truth. I hope that however your Lent has shaken out, this knowledge is never far from you, especially this week and this magnificent season to come.

On behalf of Sermons That Work and The Episcopal Church's Office of Communication, I bid you a blessed Holy Week and a joyous Easter.

Your brother in Christ,

Christopher Sikkema  
The Episcopal Church

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# The Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday

## COLLECT

Almighty and everliving God, in your tender love for the human race you sent your Son our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon him our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we may walk in the way of his suffering, and also share in his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## READINGS:

**ISAIAH 50:4-9A; PSALM 31:9-16; PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11; LUKE 22:14-23:56 OR LUKE 23:1-49**

## PROVING SCRIPTURE WRONG

by the Rev. Canon Whitney Rice

Palm Sunday is an invitation of the most extreme kind. If you picture a polite and proper written invitation to an important event, it's usually on pretty, white paper and arrives quietly in your mailbox with a diffident request for an RSVP. Palm Sunday is an invitation to events that shatter the status quo and reconfigure the universe, and it arrives with strikes of lightning, booms of thunder, and crowds shouting themselves hoarse in the streets of Jerusalem.

We are here now to make our answer to the invitation of Palm Sunday. Jesus is hailed by the crowds today, and we throng along with them, waving our palms with bright, self-congratulatory allegiance to our matchless king.

And then we have a choice. Many of us will go home and not darken the door of spiritual encounter until Easter Day. But that is a mistake.

Notice verse 12 of Psalm 31, our psalm for today. "I am forgotten

like a dead man, out of mind.” In some ways, this may be Jesus’ greatest fear. He has spent three years on Earth teaching, healing, leading people to God, to liberation, to new life. Today, on Palm Sunday, we all shout out his name with Hosannas. He is clearly top of mind.

But he knows that the time is fast approaching when we all will desert him, right along with the rest of the disciples. We will want to forget him, by that point. It’s too great of a trauma to see our teacher and friend arrested as a criminal and subjected to torture at the hands of a cruel and distant state.

“I am forgotten like a dead man, out of mind,” the psalm says. That is exactly what the chief priests and scribes want. We read in the Gospel of Mark, “The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him, for they said, ‘Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people.’”

They don’t want people holding on to their allegiance to Jesus. It’s too dangerous. The Romans are already losing patience with the Jews and their ongoing parade of political Messiahs who cause disturbance and unrest. And Rome solves its problems with violence. The chief priests and scribes know that everyone will be better off, safer if Jesus is simply forgotten.

And that’s the question we’re being asked today. When we walk out of these doors or click close on our browser window, will we forget Jesus? Will we abandon him? Will the empire of noise and news, of wealth and power, claim our uninterrupted attention for the next seven days, so that the Resurrection is a blunted anti-climax marked only by Easter eggs and dressy clothes?

That can’t be all we have to offer. That can’t be all the courage we have.

The psalms are always the place to go for the raw, unvarnished emotional truth of the Biblical experience. Jesus knew the psalms. He spoke and prayed and sang the psalms in his teaching and in his own worship life, and when his entire world crashed around him, when he felt abandoned even by God the Father on the Cross, it was the words of a psalm that he cried out in his agony: “My God,

my God, why have you forsaken me?" That question comes from Psalm 22.

And so, we can trust the psalms to teach us about Jesus, his life, his heart, his world. Try to stand in Jesus' shoes at this moment, on Palm Sunday, toward the end of the day. The crowds welcomed him into Jerusalem, waving palms and laying their cloaks in the road before him. Everyone was joyful, exuberant. The disciples felt like their moment finally had come; Jesus was going to take over Jerusalem and show the Romans who was boss.

Now it's the end of the day, and the parade is over. The crowds have gone home to make supper, and the pilgrims and others from outside the city like the disciples have found rooms at inns or courtyard corners to bed down in. Campfires crackle, and quiet conversation travels on the cool evening wind.

And where is Jesus? The colt has been handed off to someone, and the hundreds surrounding him have dwindled to the Twelve, the women, and a few other friends and followers. Everyone is laying out bedrolls and stirring pots over fires, and no one notices Jesus drifting away out of the warm circle of firelight to stand alone, gazing out at the quieting city under the stars.

Words start to arise in his heart, words that he has read in Psalm 31 since he was a boy: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am in trouble; my eye is consumed with sorrow, and also my throat and my belly." Why should he be consumed with sorrow? Did he not just receive the welcome of a lifetime from the city of Jerusalem, the heart and soul of his people? But Jesus can't fool himself. He knows what is coming, how brief their passion for him will be.

"For my life is wasted with grief, and my years with sighing; my strength fails me because of affliction, and my bones are consumed." What must it have been like to try to summon the strength to face the days ahead? Did he know he had less than a week to live?

"I have become a reproach to all my enemies and even to my neighbors, a dismay to those of my acquaintance; when they see

me in the street they avoid me.” They love him now, but once the danger becomes clear, they will flee like rats on a sinking ship.

“I am forgotten like a dead man, out of mind; I am as useless as a broken pot. For I have heard the whispering of the crowd; fear is all around; they put their heads together against me; they plot to take my life.” This is where Jesus is at the end of the day on Palm Sunday. The task that lies before him is overwhelming, and he knows that one by one, everyone will abandon him until he is all alone.

But the amazing thing is that we still have a chance. We still have a choice. We can stop everything right now and decide that we will be loyal to Jesus to the best of our ability, every day of this week that changed the world.

It may be through coming to worship. It may be through extra time in prayer and meditation every day of Holy Week. It may be through serving others who are in need, or reading the entirety of one of the gospels, or finishing our Lenten intention with special dedication and love. It doesn't matter what we do to follow Jesus to the Cross. It just matters that we do something.

“I am forgotten like a dead man, out of mind.” Our task this week is to prove that bit of scripture false, to make it wrong.

We can't do it alone. We need each other. It will be difficult. Living Holy Week fully, with integrity, demands that we sacrifice our emotional status quo and risk our carefully cultivated composure. We have to trust Jesus and follow him into the shadows, for the sake of the promise of the light. If we say yes to the invitation of Palm Sunday, we are committing to being trapped somewhere between the wrenching fear and despair of losing faith, and the ultimate promise that the resurrected Christ will shine forth over the world with love that heals and reconciles all people. We say yes to being stuck between those two poles for seven long days.

“I am forgotten like a dead man, out of mind.” Let's try to prove that bit of scripture false, remembering Jesus and staying with him from now until Easter Day.

Then he will prove the rest of it false, because he is not a dead man at all. And that's all we need to know to get through these days of despair as we wait for the light—he is alive.

*The Rev. Canon Whitney Rice (she/her/hers) is an Episcopal priest who serves as the Canon for Evangelism & Discipleship Development for the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri. She is a graduate of Yale Divinity School, where she won the Yale University Charles S. Mersick Prize for Public Address and Preaching and the Yale University E. William Muehl Award for Excellence in Preaching. She has taught undergraduate courses at the University of Indianapolis and has contributed to Lectionary Homiletics, the Young Clergy Women's Project journal Fidelia's Sisters, and other publications. She has served as a researcher and community ministry grant consultant for the Indianapolis Center for Congregations and is currently a member of The Episcopal Church's Evangelism Council of Advice. A communicator of the gospel at heart, she writes and teaches on a wide variety of topics, including rethinking evangelism, stewardship, leadership, women's theology of the body, mysticism, and spiritual development. When she's not thinking about theology, particularly the intersection of evangelism and justice work (which is all the time, seriously), you'll find her swing dancing. Find more of her work at her website Roof Crashers & Hem Grabbers ([www.roofcrashersandhemgrabbers.com](http://www.roofcrashersandhemgrabbers.com)).*





*“We still have a chance.  
We still have a choice.  
We can stop everything  
right now and decide  
that we will be loyal to  
Jesus to the best of our  
ability, every day of this  
week that changed the  
world”*

– THE REV. CANON WHITNEY RICE

1. Palm Sunday as we mark it is a day of contrast. What does the lightning-quick change between the celebration of Christ and the abandonment of him reveal about humanity?

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2. How does Psalm 31 resonate with Jesus' experience, especially during the events we mark during Holy Week?

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# Monday in Holy Week

## COLLECT

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## READINGS:

**ISAIAH 42:1-9; PSALM 36:5-11; HEBREWS 9:11-15;  
JOHN 12:1-11**

## FAITHFUL FRIENDS

by Susan Butterworth, 2019

In today's gospel passage, we encounter the Bethany family: siblings Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. We have met Martha and Mary before, in the well-known passage from Luke's gospel (Luke 10:38-42) when Jesus and his disciples rest on the road to Jerusalem in the home of sisters Mary and Martha. Remember that Martha, doing all the work of the house and hospitality while her sister Mary sits at the Lord's feet and listens to his teaching, asks Jesus to tell Mary to help her. Jesus' reply, that Mary has chosen the better part, is often taken to mean that Mary is focused on what is holy, while Martha is distracted by the tasks of the world. Sometimes Mary is described as the contemplative sister, while Martha is contrasted as the active sister.

In the eleventh chapter of John, we learn much more about this family and their role in the last weeks and days of Jesus' life. This family is central in Jesus' final and pivotal miracle, the raising of

Lazarus from the dead. We learn that Jesus loves the siblings, but when the sisters send word that their brother is ill, Jesus delays going to them. Also in John 11, we are introduced to the complex relationship between Jesus' followers and the Jews. When Jesus finally proposes returning to Judea to respond to the sisters' summons, his disciples warn him: "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" (John 11:8). In this passage Jesus and the Jews are antagonists. In contrast, we learn something important about the Bethany community of Jews. While Jesus delayed, Lazarus has died. In fact, by the time he gets to Bethany, Lazarus has been in the tomb for four days. John writes, "Many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother" (John 11:19). Some scholars, including Adele Reinhartz in her *Befriending the Beloved Disciple: A Jewish Reading of the Gospel of John*, suggest that the Bethany family were Jewish followers of Jesus, living in harmony in the Jewish community.

Are the Jews who tried to stone Jesus the same Jews who comforted Martha and Mary in their loss? Yes. And no. Let us simply say that there was diversity within the Jewish community, multiple ways of being Jewish. Some Jews were threatened by the popular young teacher; some Jews accepted him as Messiah; some Jews were willing to live in a society with a diversity of beliefs and practices.

With her brother in the tomb and her sister at home in the company of their Jewish neighbors, Martha goes to meet Jesus on the road. There she affirms her faith: Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and those who believe in him will never die. Then Jesus, with Martha, Mary, and the weeping Jews, goes to the tomb, and the dead man is raised to life. The raising of Lazarus is pivotal both because it foreshadows Jesus' own death and resurrection, and also because the miracle—and Jesus' great love for his friends—persuades many of the witnesses to join his followers, thus further threatening the Jewish religious and political establishment. From that time forward, Jesus was a marked man. The scene is set in motion for his arrest and passion. He lies low for a while, but

Passover approaches and Jesus has a destiny to fulfill. He turns toward Jerusalem.

As our gospel passage for today begins, Jesus has stopped in Bethany, seeking rest at the home of his friends Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, who provide a meal for him and his disciples. Mary, in an act of reverence and humility, anoints Jesus' feet with costly perfumed oil, and wipes his feet with her hair. In the passage from John, Judas is named as the disciple who reprimands her, though in both Matthew's and Mark's versions of this scene, this rebuke is made by unnamed disciples. Jesus defends her and makes the enigmatic comment: "You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me." What could he possibly mean by this seemingly callous remark about the poor?

A little research into the family at Bethany is revealing. Mary and Martha appear to be unmarried, independent young women, unusual at the time. Scholars speculate that they may have belonged to an ascetic Jewish sect, possibly the Essenes. Evidence from the Dead Sea scrolls, as well as historians Josephus and Jerome, suggests that Bethany was the location of a hospice for lepers and the poor, a center of charity. In fact, Bethany – beth 'anya in Aramaic – translates as House of the Poor or House of the Suffering. It is likely that the gospel references to the house in Bethany refer to a communal home, of which Martha was the housekeeper. The costly nard perfume may have been a donation from a wealthy benefactor for the benefit of the poor. This would explain the disciples' comment about selling the perfume and giving the money to the poor. It would also explain Jesus' words about the poor being always with them.

What we do know for sure is that both Martha and Mary were women of great faith and devotion. Martha, even in the face of her brother's death, declares unequivocally that she believes. Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in him, even if they die, shall live forever. "Yes, Lord," says Martha, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world." Her declaration of faith is no less stunning than Mary's act of devotion at Jesus' feet.

And Lazarus. His love for Jesus will cost him dearly as well. As the man who has been raised from the dead, he is dangerous. Here we see the stark contrast between the chief priests and the Jews of the community. Since many of the people, on account of Lazarus, have deserted the priestly establishment to follow Jesus, the chief priests resolve to put Lazarus to death as well. The gospels do not reveal what happened to Lazarus of Bethany. According to tradition in Southern France, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus were put out to sea by Jews hostile to the followers of Jesus, in a boat without sails or oars. They landed miraculously in Provence, where Lazarus went on to preach and convert many to Christianity, became Bishop of Marseille, and was later martyred during the persecution of Domitian.

Now, on the Monday of Holy Week, six days before Easter, we await with the Bethany family, Our Lord's betrayal, arrest, and passion. Like them, we know what is coming. We will have great need of our faith during this week's journey to the cross. May we, like Martha, offer our faith in the sure knowledge of resurrection and eternal life. May we, like Mary, offer our most precious gifts in devotion at the feet of the Master. May we, like Lazarus, offer our lives as witness to God's word and deed. May we, in humility, love, and confidence, offer a place in our hearts for our dear friend, brother, and Lord, Jesus, to rest on his journey. Amen.

*This sermon was written by Susan Butterworth for Monday in Holy Week in 2019.*

*“The scene is set in motion  
for his arrest and passion.  
He lies low for a while,  
but Passover approaches  
and Jesus has a destiny to  
fulfill. He turns toward  
Jerusalem.”*

– SUSAN BUTTERWORTH, 2019



1. What can Martha, Mary, and Lazarus teach us about faithfulness and devotion? What aspects of each sibling do you see in yourself?

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2. Write and share about a time you had to trust God’s timing, even when it was difficult.

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## Tuesday in Holy Week

### COLLECT

O God, by the passion of your blessed Son you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life: Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ, that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### READINGS:

**ISAIAH 49:1-7; PSALM 71:1-14; I CORINTHIANS 1:18-31; JOHN 12:20-36**

### BREAKING BARRIERS

by the Rev. Charles Wynder

Conflict, confrontation, and choices amid feelings, hopes, and fears. What's happening on this Tuesday of Holy Week? What have we seen and what will we witness on this part of our journey? How does it speak to us today? We are called to remember that we have seen some amazing things in our walk. Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem on Sunday was colorful and moving, with Jesus riding the donkey and the multitude laying palms in his path and crying out, "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!" A powerful scene to witness. Yesterday, we witnessed Mary taking a pound of perfume and anointing Jesus' feet during a dinner at the home of Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead. Our mind's eye is full of scenes with great meaning and significance.

Today's Gospel is equally compelling. Marilyn Salmon observes that our Gospel invites us to recognize the power of the ability to see that which is not accessible by ordinary sight. The Rev. Canon

Ed Rodman often advised the Church and its people to view the world through Gospel eyes. And, when we do – we witness those things which the eye has not seen, ears have not heard, and that which has yet to enter our hearts.

Today, we see an opportunity to move beyond ethnocentrism, a choice we can make this Holy Tuesday that is beyond many of our ordinary visions. Yet, it is a foundational message that speaks through our Gospel. Perhaps this is what the Greeks are doing in the Gospel. They are viewing the world with Gospel eyes and seeking to witness the Good News embodied by Jesus. They wish to see the truth and light that is Jesus. Perhaps they recognize the coming revelation of Jesus as Christ. When we look and listen closely, we find that the Greeks were among those at the festival, and they intentionally seek out someone to help them see Jesus. They approach Philip and tell him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Jesus is interested in meeting them. He does not resist. The interest of the Greeks in seeing Jesus and Jesus’ openness to their inquiry are significant in the context of Jesus’ world; his public ministry takes place at a time when ethnocentrism is normal and thickly complex.

Jesus’ public ministry pushes against the hierarchy of human value that claims some of us are better than others, some less human than others, some more deserving of God’s favor and grace than others. Jesus went beyond the bias of his cultural context and the religious practices of the Jewish people and authorities. We see this in his Parable of the Good Samaritan in which the Samaritan – the Other – demonstrates the power of love to the man who fell victim to robbers. We see it in Jesus’ interaction with the woman at the well. He teaches and demonstrates there are no throwaway people.

It’s against this background that we are invited to view his openness to Philip’s inquiry on behalf of the Greeks who wish to see him. He does not ask why they want to see him. He immediately proclaims the desire of the Greeks to see him as the embodiment of the goal of his walk on earth. Scholars note that Jesus’ response to Philip is a proclamation of his salvific mission

to all on earth. His openness to their inquiry and his response reinforce his choice to confront the status quo of ethnocentrism. He chooses to teach and embody love for neighbor beyond one's tribe. The religious authorities see the same and are threatened by its significance; in the verse before our Gospel reading, some religious authorities are impacted by the broadening impact of Jesus' signs and the multitude's embrace of him. They react to the response of the crowd, saying, "You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!" We begin to recognize the power of the observations Michael Marsh makes about Holy Week as a time of conflict, confrontation, and choices. Conflict, confrontation, and choices amid feelings, hopes, and fears.

Perhaps the Greeks are a sign that Jesus' message and his significance as the Son of Man is coming and is meant to be the salvation for all people in the world. The presence of the Greeks and their desire to see Jesus in a context and world that is thick with ethnocentrism is Good News that we should embrace in our times: It speaks across time and the particularities of any context. Let's look closely at the substance of Jesus' response to Philip:

*"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor."*

Religious scholar Dr. Dominic Obielosi posits that the Greeks' visit is a confirmation of the message that salvation is for all who believe and not just for the Jews of the region initially following Jesus. This message is foundational in our times today; it signals that we, too, must understand that God's salvific mission is not only for us in our parishes, in our tradition, but for the world. It forces us to acknowledge that the first people to seek out Jesus after his triumphal entry to Jerusalem were the Greeks.

All of this reinforces the observation that the Greeks did not come to see Jesus the teacher, or the miracle worker, but the Jesus who must die first to bear the fruit of gathering all properly to himself. It is against this background that we are invited to recognize that Philip's response to the Greeks signals the position of the church in its mission of reconciling people of all backgrounds to God. In this period when so much of the public life is shaped by leveraging ethnocentric signals to reinforce power, status, and private privilege, our Holy Tuesday calls us to embrace a transforming Christology.

Conflict, confrontation, and choices amid feelings, hopes, and fears. In the time of Jesus' Passion during Holy Week, this Holy Tuesday we see Jesus choose to embrace his public ministry of breaking down divisions between peoples and proclaiming the equality of all people. Let us embrace a Christology that is transformative, moving beyond the prejudices of our day. May we order our steps during this Holy Week; may we show people Jesus and may we better understand his salvific mission to redeem the world and reconcile us to God and one another. Amen.

*The Rev. Charles Wynder is the dean of chapel and spiritual life at St. Paul's School in Concord, N.H.*

*“Jesus’ public ministry pushes against the hierarchy of human value that claims some of us are better than others, some less human than others, some more deserving of God’s favor and grace than others.”*

– THE REV. CHARLES WYNDER

1. What does the presence of the Greeks in the Gospel symbolize about Jesus' mission?

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2. Who does your congregation serve? What are some ways your congregation can reach out beyond its traditional boundaries – or alternatively, more fully embrace the people already within your physical boundaries?

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## Wednesday in Holy Week

### COLLECT

Lord God, whose blessed Son our Savior gave his body to be whipped and his face to be spit upon: Give us grace to accept joyfully the sufferings of the present time, confident of the glory that shall be revealed; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### READINGS:

**ISAIAH 50:4-9A; PSALM 70; HEBREWS 12:1-3;  
JOHN 13:21-32**

### JOURNEYING

by the Rev. Dr. Marshall Jolly

Hebrews is something of an anomaly among New Testament writings. It tells of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, but it's not a Gospel. It appears to be written to a particular community of faith, but it's not a letter in the traditional sense. It is very much concerned with our lives of faith, including eschatology, but it's not an apocalypse, nor is it a history.

All that is known of Hebrews is gleaned from reading between the lines, and when we squint just right, we find a community of faith that is in trouble.

Here we find a congregation that was once on fire for the work of the Gospel—baptizing, sending out, teaching, preaching, serving, giving, all in Jesus' name. Their worship was once lively and inspiring; their community bound together in mutual respect, love, and service; their vision united in expectation of the triumphal return of Christ.



But now?

The Sunday School children are now married with children of their own; the young families group has grandchildren; and those who once taught the children to sing “Jesus Loves Me” have themselves taken their place in the company of saints and angels.

If this doesn’t sound familiar in the contemporary church’s hearing, pay closer attention.

Hebrews is a community that is in despair, and their pastor is doing everything imaginable to restore at least a modicum of hope, to ignite even the faintest ember of faith in their weary souls.

It is in this context that we must hear the soaring poetry that begins the twelfth chapter: “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart.”

Sometimes in life, the simplest reminder is also the one that can save our life: We are not alone.

Even when the only way out is through, we never walk alone because we are joined both by the saints who walk the way with us in this life, and those who have already taken their place in the next.

For Christians, this is the week that is the end of all weeks. We stand today at the precipice of the holiest three days

of all, as we journey with Jesus from the Last Supper, to the cross, to the tomb. And ultimately, we travel onward to meet the Risen Lord on Easter morning.

Be forewarned, beloved: This journey is not for the faint of heart.

But this journey is for those whose hope has been hushed; whose faith is burning down to its last embers; whose despair at the weight of the world has caused them to search for something new—something different.

This journey is not one we take with our minds only, nor our hearts only, but with our selves, our souls, and our bodies.

This journey bids us come on our knees, nourished by God's own body and blood, as we see in death the promise of eternal life consummated in the risen Jesus.

May we who are called to this journey embark with the assurance that we are not alone. In fact, we are joined by that great cloud of witnesses who guide us along the way, so that, at the last, we find our home in Christ.

Amen.

*The Reverend Dr. Marshall Jolly is rector of Saint Thaddeus Episcopal Church and president of Mead Hall Episcopal School in Aiken, South Carolina. He holds degrees from Emory University and Transylvania University. He and his wife are managed by their fluffy little Himalayan cat with a big personality, Hambrick.*



*“This journey is for those whose hope has been hushed; whose faith is burning down to its last embers; whose despair at the weight of the world has caused them to search for something new—something different.”*

– THE REV. DR. MARSHALL JOLLY

1. Share a story of two people (past or present) who have been spiritual mentors or inspirations.

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2. Draw a simplified map of your spiritual journey thus far. Share a few of the points that were especially remarkable to you.

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# Maundy Thursday

## COLLECT

Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood: Mercifully grant that we may receive it thankfully in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord, who in these holy mysteries gives us a pledge of eternal life; and who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

## READINGS:

**EXODUS 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14; PSALM 116:1, 10-17;  
1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-26; JOHN 13:1-17, 31B-35**

## DEPARTURES

by the Rev. Phil Hooper

It is not as common an experience in North America, but perhaps you have had, at some point or place in your life, the distinctive experience of standing on the platform of a train station, either as the one who is departing or the one bidding farewell. If not, you've at least seen it in the movies—that oddly potent mixture of wistfulness and anticipation, the quick embrace, the nervous hustle, and the quick step up and away, gently rumbling off toward the horizon. And then the fluttering handkerchief, the tears, and the rush of wind across the empty tracks. It's an image that is stuck in our collective imagination, even if we are more accustomed to other, more impersonal and less evocative modes of transport.

And it's an instructive image, though perhaps an unconventional one, to hold in our minds today on Maundy Thursday, as we embark on our own three-day journey across the valleys and peaks of the Paschal Mystery. We will see and experience much together on these liturgical tracks: dazzling vistas of memory and promise; the quiet intimacy of a shared meal; and at times

the inky blackness of night, with our reflection in the glass as our only companion. Eventually, we will arrive at an entirely new and unimaginable destination, where One waits to greet us in the dusky, verdant dawn of a Sunday morning. But right now, on Maundy Thursday, we are in the midst of our departure and we should attend to what departures can teach us.

First, *travel light*. That is the message that God has for the Israelites on the cusp of their own departure into their destiny. Eat quickly, reverently, and then travel light, leaving behind all those things that cannot endure the journey—your boxes of despair, your chests of regret, your shackles of servitude. Leave them behind in a pile, with the blood of the lamb marking the spot of their abandonment, as you abandon yourselves to the new thing that God desires for you—liberation, courage, undaunted joy. Wrap yourselves in a mantle of trust and wave goodbye to your subjugation, for the Way of the Lord is broad and cuts straight across the wilderness for those willing to step up and be carried away.

And you will discover, as you go, that traveling light is one thing that always sets the people of God apart from the likes of Pharaoh and his counterparts, those tyrants who traffic in heavy, swordlike certainties. Unlike them, the people of God always have a bit of the railroad vagabond about them—the dusty feet and the deep hunger and the eyes widened by wonder and the heart softened by humility. The Passover departure teaches us that our liberation and our salvation will always bear the imprint of that dusty, hungry, vibrant spirit of our forebears. To escape the old heartbreak, to reach the land beyond the Red Sea, to become the light of the world, *travel light*.

Departure's second teaching is this: *Say goodbye*. Jesus' supper with his disciples, among all the other things it is, is a goodbye meal. Our Lord knows, tonight, that the train will soon pull out of the station, toward a place where, for now, only he can go. But before he goes, a proper farewell is required—the kind that leaves nothing unsaid, nothing withheld.

God knows we can go through our lives lulled by the assumption

of tomorrow. Surely there will always be time to say what needs saying to the ones we love. But occasionally, piercingly, we discover that this is not so, that people are called away on the night train, and we are left on the empty platform with a thousand unimparted sentiments weighing our hearts down like a millstone.

Jesus says, “*No, there will be no withheld words among us, my friends.*” We will speak our love, we will speak our fears, we will speak our souls to one another across this table in the dimming light. We will confess our care, cleansing and holding onto one another while we still can do these things. Because yes, departure is imminent, but now, here, in the eternal, Eucharistic, precious present, we have a new commandment: To be and say everything that we are, to feast upon each other’s fullness. And this goodbye will be enough to sustain you through the darkness of the days to come, across the hungry years and the lonely places. This meal, this moment, this perfect goodbye, will be enough until we see each other again. So, say *goodbye*.

Finally, tonight, departure teaches us that *God is among the travelers*. God is, and always has been, the One found in transit and transition. From the wilderness journey of Israel to the long and winding road of Jesus and his followers, God is most reliably present in liminal places and in liminal people. And this is good wisdom to take with us on the way, we who are disciples in an age of crumbling certainties.

If we wish to know where to look for God in such a time as this, we should not be beguiled by the promises of monumentality and unyielding strength. Those are and always have been the wrong places to look, the wrong places to seek hope, even if they seem to last for a little while.

No, for those with ears to hear, God’s call has always been more like a train whistle than a war trumpet, and if we would truly follow, then we should look for God among the people who know about departures—the ones who know all too well about stepping up onto the train as it leaves the station. And who are they? They are the migrant, and the unhoused, and the lost and



the hungry. They are the ones who have transitioned and the ones who have come out. They are the ones who know: There are worse things than leaving home because sometimes venturing out is the only thing that can save us.

As with the Israelites and with Jesus, too, we learn from these saints of departure how to leave behind the affection we have known for the sake of a greater love. We learn how to lay down our baggage, how to lay down our lives, so that we might live in a different way, whole and holy, and free.

It is something that Pharaoh does not understand; something that God alone can reveal to us. It is something unfamiliar and alive, this departure that beckons toward the horizon, that calls us toward that thing waiting for us on the other side of night.

And with all this in mind, it's important to notice that on this Maundy Thursday, our liturgy does not actually end when we leave. It keeps going. We keep moving in perpetual transit through these three days. Tonight, we have simply embarked, because the God of departures, at work in our hearts, has told us, again, that it is time to go.

So, like those who have gone before us, like all those who have had the courage to depart, gather up what is precious to you. Eat quickly, but reverently. Lay down that which has burdened you thus far. Speak words of love and truth and gratitude to one another. And then step up and come away.

It is a perilous and powerful journey, the one we are about to make together. But, as has always been the case, it is the journey that will save us. It is the journey that, since the very beginning, God has been hoping we will make.

All aboard.

*The Rev. Phil Hooper* serves as rector of Saint Anne Episcopal Church, West Chester, in the Diocese of Southern Ohio. He is a contributor to several Episcopal publications and a board member of the Center for Deep Green Faith. His sermons and other writings can be found at **[www.byanotherroad.com](http://www.byanotherroad.com)**.

*“‘[This] is the journey  
that, since the very  
beginning, God has been  
hoping we will make.’”*

– THE REV. PHIL HOOPER

1. Where do you see God most at work—in moments of stability or transition?

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2. What does it mean to “travel light” in our spiritual journeys?

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# Good Friday

## COLLECT

Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

## READINGS:

**ISAIAH 52:13-53:12; PSALM 22; HEBREWS 10:16-25  
OR HEBREWS 4:14-16; 5:7-9; JOHN 18:1-19:42**

## TRAINING GROUND

by the Rev. Anna Tew

A blessed Good Friday to you, as we remember the death of Jesus, the one who loved us to the end.

Good Friday brings us face to face with something we spend our lives trying to avoid: Death.

On either end of this journey of Lent, we find ourselves needing to look death full in the face. On Ash Wednesday, we are asked to look at our own mortality.

On Good Friday, we are asked to look as even the Son of God embraces death.

Good Friday is a training ground.

Today, on Good Friday, we are asked not to look ahead to Sunday, but to sit here, at the foot of the cross. At the entrance to a grave. Today, we have to do what we do throughout life when beloved people die; we are asked to walk away in sadness.

Let's not skip ahead. Good Friday has something to teach us.

The disciples did not know that Sunday would bring relief.  
The disciples did not know that Jesus would be resurrected.  
The disciples did not know that there was any hope. They walked away in sadness. They hid in fear.

The disciples sat where we sit when someone we love dies. Because it is common knowledge that when people die, they typically do not come back to us in three days.

Good Friday is a training ground.

Because as much as we would like to avoid it, death is coming for each of us. Death is coming — for each of us and those we love.

Good Friday teaches us to look at death, to accept it as reality, to have patience with it. Because Jesus did it first.

Good Friday teaches us that when we are at our lowest, God is there. Good Friday teaches us that when we suffer, God is there. Good Friday teaches us that when we all inevitably face the reality that is death, God is there. God has been there. God will be there. Even in the depths of the grave. Good Friday teaches us that there is no grave that we could go into — literally or figuratively — in which God cannot reach us.

In the gospel text for the day, we hear the story of Jesus' death as told by John. While the other gospels feature miraculous happenings when Jesus dies, like tombs being opened or the curtain of the Temple being torn in two, in John, we do not hear of those. For whatever reason, the evangelist does not choose to feature those occurrences. Because it is generally accepted that John was the last gospel to be written, we can safely assume that the fourth evangelist knew about them, but they are simply not featured in his writing.

No, instead, in John's gospel, Jesus simply breathes his last. Jesus simply dies. Fittingly, for a gospel in which Jesus is the love of God made flesh for the sake of the world, Jesus simply dies the death of a human. Just like us.

Also fittingly, Jesus does what many people do when they know that they are about to die. He takes care of his friends. He takes care of his mother. He gives the beloved disciple to his mother, and she to him, to care for one another.

After he dies, we meet a character that we also met in chapter 3 of John: Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a Pharisee who first came to Jesus by night. It was to Nicodemus that Jesus said his famous words in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life."

After Jesus dies, Nicodemus shows that Jesus' words that night had an impact. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea show up to collect Jesus' body and bury him.

Yes, we know the end of the story. We know that Jesus will be resurrected. We know that Sunday is coming.

But on Good Friday, we are asked to forget that we know the ending. We are asked to sit with death and accept its reality because God endured death first.

Good Friday is a training ground.

Good Friday reminds us, every single year, that death is a reality that we must face, but that we need not be afraid because Jesus has endured it first.

Caleb Wilde authored the book "Confessions of a Funeral Director: How Death Saved My Life." He is a sixth-generation funeral director who has spoken and written extensively about death and how we like to avoid it, and when we

cannot, to outsource it to professionals. He has also made a writing career out of the virtues of learning to accept death.

He writes,

“I don’t like being around people who haven’t been touched by death, who haven’t embraced mortality.

Death humbles us. I don’t like proud people.

Death brings us closer to our mortality. I don’t like people who feel invincible.

Death brings unanswerable questions. I don’t like people who have all the answers.

Death trains us in silence. I don’t need people in my life who try to fill silence with words.

Death unites me with every human, every thing — past, present and future — on this planet and beyond. I don’t need people who separate themselves, blinded to this universal connectedness.

Death helps us befriend sadness. Toxic positivity is real and I can do without, thank you very much.

Death is the great iconoclast for superficial achievements. I don’t want to hear about your career, your degrees, your bank account and success. Show me your soul.

Death is the permanent reminder that we’re human. I’ve been around those who try to be the god of their world and I can do without them.

Death is where I meet you, where you meet me. And that’s all I want. All the other [stuff] isn’t worth this small amount of time I have to experience the magic and mystery of this cosmic miracle we call life.

Turns out those who are full of life are those who've embraced death. Those are my people."

So let us, here on Good Friday, embrace death with Jesus.

Let us, here at the end of the Lenten season, look mortality full in the face, as we have been asked to do from the beginning. And in our looking, let us remember that there is no grave, literal or figurative, in which God cannot find us. Because God has, as always, gone before us.

Good Friday is a training ground.

If Good Friday unsettles us, it is because death unsettles us. Let us embrace that we are finite. Let us embrace that our lives are temporary. And may that make us more fully alive.

And let us embrace the hope of Good Friday: That while death is the worst thing, the hope we have in Jesus is that *the worst thing* is never *the last thing*.

We are dust, we are mortal, and we are bound for the grave.

But the Good news, beloved, is that Jesus has gone before us to the grave.

And where Jesus is, there is hope – on Good Friday and forever. Amen.

*The Rev. Anna Tew is a Lutheran pastor based in South Hadley, Massachusetts. She has served a fantastic little parish called Our Savior's Lutheran Church for seven years. Anna was born and raised in Alabama and considers Atlanta her second home. She graduated from the Candler School of Theology at Emory University in 2011 and has served in a variety of settings since then, including both parish ministry and hospital chaplaincy. In her spare time, she enjoys hiking, CrossFit, and music of all kinds.*





*“There is no grave, literal or figurative, in which God cannot find us. Because God has, as always, gone before us.”*

– THE REV. ANNA TEW

1. Why does the sermon emphasize sitting with death rather than rushing to resurrection?

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2. Spend time in quiet reflection near a cross.

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# The Great Vigil of Easter

## COLLECT

O God, who made this most holy night to shine with the glory of the Lord's resurrection: Stir up in your Church that Spirit of adoption which is given to us in Baptism, that we, being renewed both in body and mind, may worship you in sincerity and truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

## READINGS:

**EXODUS 14:10-31; 15:20-21; PSALM 114;  
ROMANS 6:3-11; LUKE 24:1-12**

## REMEMBER HIS WORDS

by Katerina Katsarka Whitley

The Great Vigil of Easter starts with death. Those who are keeping the first holy vigil in Christian history have had only one day to prepare for it; they have had no time to get used to the idea that their beloved is dying, as do those who watch a person weakened by illness. The Beloved whom they are mourning on Saturday night was young and vigorous and fully alive on Thursday. And those who are keeping vigil have not been taught about resurrection.

If we don't keep this reality in mind, we cannot enter into the misery and hopelessness of the first great vigil.

Vigil, in all religious traditions, means to watch, to wait, to observe—most often also to mourn. Those of us who have waited, wept, and prayed when a loved one was lying in bed struggling for the last breath know both the pain and the privilege of keeping watch as life leaves the beloved body. Our Christian faith teaches us that this is not the end, that even though the

body is now empty, the person still lives; we still retain the awareness of the presence of the loved one.

On that first Saturday, however, on the Golgotha hill, those who are keeping vigil after the most terrible loss imaginable do not have a strong belief in resurrection. After Jesus was taken down from the cross and furtively wrapped in borrowed linen and placed in Joseph's unused tomb, those who had loved him were left without hope. The men who had lived with him during his public ministry, frightened and cowed, went into hiding. The vigil was left to the women, for this is what women did and continue to do. Those Jewish women who had loved him stayed with him while he struggled on the horrible cross, when his agony was so intense that it was unbearable to watch it—those women remained with him. The same women now stood near the tomb that hid him, waiting to offer him the rites prescribed by their tradition. The burial had been hasty; he deserved better than that. His body deserved washing and anointing with the finest oil and perfumes, to be wrapped by loving hands in clean linen.

What is strange is that they had scant hope of accomplishing their mission. They knew that the Romans would not let them get close to the tomb and that the priests' guard would be opposed to their approach. They had seen the huge stone covering the entrance to the cave, the finality of loss.

Yet, these women didn't say: "We can't do anything. Let's just stay with the men and see what happens. Maybe the danger will pass eventually." No. They kept their vigil. They came prepared with what was needed on such solemn occasions. Luke uses only the word "spices," but the custom was that they would wash the body, anoint it with oil, and use the spices before wrapping it in clean linen for the final burial. All this preparation for the vigil took place in the night and, unafraid of the darkness before dawn, they climbed again the dreaded hill of death.

Remember, they are women alone. Their men are in hiding. Even John, who stayed with him under the cross as he was dying, must have returned to the house, taking care of Jesus' mother as he

had been commanded to do. So, this is the scene: The men are in hiding—the eleven who had been with him from the first moment he encountered Peter and Andrew fishing in the Sea of Galilee, to the terrible agony in the Garden of Gethsemane when they couldn't stay awake with him as he prayed. Since that night, they seem to have forgotten all that he has taught them.

The women who had become his followers, the women healed and redeemed by him with his love, refuse to abandon him. What are they thinking as they wait in the darkness of the bushes across from the burial place for the dawn to break? Their hearts are already broken; they have lost the one who gave them life, who gave them the water that never goes dry, the hope that never vanishes completely. So, with hope, they wait for the miracle that will allow them to perform the rites due their beloved dead. Do they remember any of his words?

This irrational hope is with them as dawn breaks, and they climb to the cave that serves as his tomb. They know they will recognize it because of the enormous stone that covers its entrance. Who will be kind enough to open it for them? Being practical is a trait of women. Their tasks during the days of their lives are so many, that they have learned to take care of physical needs and details since so many depend on them. So, their thinking this morning is focused on the detail of opening the tomb. They know how to do the rest.

A great surprise awaits them. The surprise of the ages. The tomb is open, and the body is gone!

Still, they don't remember any of his words. It takes two beings in brilliant white to remind them: "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." Then they remembered his words...

Why do we look for the living among the dead? Life awaits us. Together with those two brilliant messengers who came to the women, St. Paul comes to us, in our vigil, to assure us: "We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him." Thanks be to God.

*Katerina Katsarka Whitley lives and writes in Boone, N.C. She leads writing workshops and leads retreats on Poetry of Faith, on Lent and Advent. She is the author of eight books on biblical stories and faith.*

*“Why do we look for the  
living among the dead?  
Life awaits us.”*

– KATERINA KATSARKA WHITLEY



1. How can we apply the message, “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” to our spiritual lives?

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2. The women prepared burial spices even though they weren’t sure they could reach Jesus’ body. What does this act of faith and devotion teach us?

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# Easter Day

## COLLECT

O God, who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross, and by his glorious resurrection delivered us from the power of our enemy: Grant us so to die daily to sin, that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

## READINGS:

**ACTS 10:34-43 OR ISAIAH 65:17-25; PSALM 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 CORINTHIANS 15:19-26 OR ACTS 10:34-43; JOHN 20:1-18 OR LUKE 24:1-12**

## HOPE IN DESPAIR

by the Rt. Rev. Frank Logue

Darkness still hides the coming dawn as Mary Magdalene ventures out to Jesus' tomb. What she sees shakes this fearless follower of Jesus to her marrow. She discovers that the massive stone set in place to seal his tomb has been removed. Mary has no thoughts of resurrection. An empty tomb is frightening when you don't know what happened to the body of the deceased.

The Gospel of John picks up the story here from the afternoon of Jesus' crucifixion. We have moved beyond the brutal scene Magdalene witnessed on Friday as Jesus was tortured and died on the cross. Silence follows the sure and certain knowledge that the long hoped-for Messiah has been executed. Jesus' death plunged those who loved him into the dark night of hopelessness. John uses this imagery of light and darkness as he wrote of Jesus, "What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people." John sets the enlightenment that comes

through faith in Jesus in opposition to the lack of hope of a world turned from God, which he likens to a world with no source of light. Jesus told his followers, “I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness.”

Jesus’ followers are enveloped in grief and fear with no hope that light will return. Their grief was an immense ocean of loss. They had lost not just a friend or teacher, but their desire to see good conquer evil and love defeat hate. The loss of the light of Christ here can be compared to extinguishing all the lights when you are in a cave. Deep underground, where not even the faintest glimmer exists, the darkness is palpable, weighty. This is something John wants to convey about the longest sabbath of his life as Jesus lay entombed near the site of his death.

Jesus of Nazareth was a real man, well attested to historically, who gathered an impressive following before being put to death as a threat to the status quo by a Roman provincial governor. There had been and would be many more would-be Messiahs. That the Jesus Movement persisted centuries after his death is what is so highly unusual. The continued existence of faith in Jesus points us back to what occurred that Sunday morning in the garden tomb in Jerusalem that transformed human history by igniting a new hope in those lost in grief.

We read in the Gospel that Mary Magdalene was so bewildered by the empty tomb that she went for help and soon Simon Peter and John were literally racing to the tomb. John arrived first to see the linen wrappings without pushing into the tomb itself. Peter goes inside and discovers the linen wrappings, with the head cloth rolled up and set in a place by itself. John’s Gospel shows how the light of the glory of what God had done in raising Jesus was slow to dawn on his followers. This lack of recognition reveals the way despair clouds our vision and hinders us from seeing rightly. It takes time for the eyes of their hearts to adjust to this new light. Peter and John return home. Only Mary Magdalene remains. She stands weeping outside the tomb. Jesus says, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?”

She still cannot grasp the world-changing revelation of Jesus' resurrection even though he is standing in front of her. Hearing her name called by Jesus, the light of the glory of God floods in. Mary Magdalene becomes the Apostle to the Apostles, bringing the Good News that life has conquered death. She went out into the darkness of the night to return illumined by the risen Jesus.

Notice that the anguish the disciples endured was warranted. We find that despair is the natural reaction to seeing the fallen world as it is. We see all the effects of our sin and disobedience to God's will. We see the painful divisions that we humans have collectively created. Despair is what arises in our spirits when we look realistically at this situation but do so without hope in a God who acts in human history. Hope sees the world from the godly perspective, knowing that all we see is not all that there is.

We see this shift in perspective as first Mary Magdalene and then the rest of Jesus' followers will come to experience Jesus anew after his resurrection. Then after the coming of the Holy Spirit fifty days later at Pentecost, they would be astounded to see how people who never knew Jesus when he was alive, came to experience him as they did. And for us as well, the real proof of the resurrection comes not just in a story of something that happened long ago, but also in our own experience of God's presence. This is something way more reliable than your feelings. For you should know that you will not always feel Christ in and with you, yet in looking back over difficult times, we can see how God was with us. You can know if the peace was beyond you or if the healing or the sense of release with forgiveness comes from God.

We see in Jesus' crucifixion, how far the love of God extends, to never give up on that love, even when it means death on a cross. God, the Holy Trinity, who made us out of love for love did not stand back like a disinterested clockmaker. Our transcendent God entered into this broken world in the person of Jesus, to redeem us through his passion, death, resurrection, and ascension. In the resurrection, we discover how good defeats evil and love conquers hate.

Look at your own life and the times you thought you could barely lift your head and go on. Then there was a little resurrection as hope was restored. Sometimes, even this lesser resurrection is quite profound as a person claws their way back to the light from the deep darkness of an opioid addiction in a series of fits and starts, rehab and relapse, to finally wake from the nightmare and live day by day empowered by the same Holy Spirit who transformed the disciples, who followed Jesus, into Apostles, who took the faith to the ends of the earth. When that person tells you that the healing could never have come without God, believe them. Signs of resurrection abound.

Easter is a moveable feast in that we can share the joy of the resurrection—light dispelling the darkness—at any time and in every place where we find someone hurting and in need of kindness. You can shine a lamp into the depths when you have co-workers, friends, and family who will experience the feeling of abandonment whether in the midst of cancer treatment, the death of a marriage, or by being downsized out of a job. Simply showing up to be with someone in such a time of sorrow or distress can be like striking a match in an abyss. The Holy Spirit can and will use your faithfulness to restore their trust and confidence as well as yours.

While a realistic look at the world gives rise to despondency, when we know that God can, does, and will show up, we are reassured that light still shines in the darkness and the darkness can never overcome it. Whatever may come, you are known and loved by the God who holds eternity and who is also Emmanuel, the God with you in every storm of life. Knowing the power and presence of God is the spark that makes turning from despair to hope not only possible but also reasonable and right. For greater is the one who is in us even in our darkest moments than the one in our despairing world.

*The Rt. Rev. Frank Logue is the bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Georgia. He was previously a member of the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church while serving as canon to the ordinary in Georgia. He was also the church planter for King of Peace Episcopal Church in Kingsland, Georgia.*

*“Our transcendent God entered into this broken world in the person of Jesus, to redeem us through his passion, death, resurrection, and ascension. In the resurrection, we discover how good defeats evil and love conquers hate.”*

– THE RT. REV. FRANK LOGUE

1. What roles do light and darkness play in this sermon, and how does it shape our understanding of resurrection?

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2. Share a story about how you experienced new life after a season of difficulty. Did you feel God during that season, or did it take some time?

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Sermons for Holy Week and Easter 2025:  
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