

Easter Sunrise

March 31, 2024 (Year B)



This is something to ponder, that the Lord first appeared to Mary Magdalene, and it is something to consider that he first appeared to a woman. It is a great comfort that women are the type of those who hear the gospel. In these women there is a great unconquerable strength out of the Word that stands firm against all assaults of Satan.

– Martin Luther –
Easter Book

PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

Exodus 15:1–11

In the climactic story of God’s deliverance, the army of Pharaoh was drowned in the Red Sea as they pursued Moses and the Israelites out of Egypt. In celebration, Moses and his companions sang praises to God who rescued them from certain death. They called God a “man of war” — one who overtakes his enemies and plunges them headlong into the raging waters he separated to save his people.

The imagery here is so descriptive and dramatic, “At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up; the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea” (15:8 ESV). The Hebrew word **qapha** — meaning “congealed” or “coagulated” — refers to when a liquid becomes thick and solid. God took the water of the Red Sea and turned it into something that was so thick and muddy that there would be no hope of swimming to safety.

- When you hear words like “congealed” and “coagulated” do you think the Biblical writer is trying to create an image of a bloody battle in this soon-to-be watery grave? Can you imagine this scene for what it really was? If so, how does that impact your trust in the Lord?

The song continues praising God for blowing the wind and destroying Israel’s enemies. In these verses, the word for “wind” is the same word used in Hebrew for the Spirit of God: **ruach**. This wind caused the seas to move and cover the army that then sank to the bottom of the waters.

- How is the wind in this passage a clue to one of the ways that God’s Spirit works in the world? What does God’s Spirit put to death in us? How does this same Spirit give us new life?

Psalms 118:15–29

Today’s psalm is also a song of victory and salvation. Shouts of joy are uttered by the psalmist as he rejoiced over what God has done in his life. God’s power has been displayed and that power gives confidence for a long life. The psalmist says that he will share the truth of God’s goodness!

- Did you know that Psalm 118:22 is the Old Testament verse most-often quoted in the New Testament? (Six times!) In what way is this verse an excellent summary of the Gospel message proclaiming what Christ has done for humanity?
- What is so important about the first stone laid in a foundation (i.e. the cornerstone)? In what ways is Jesus the stability, guide, and anchor for the Church?
- How can an understanding of Jesus as the cornerstone of our lives help us in times of trouble?

1 Corinthians 5:6b–8

Be sure to read the first half of verse 6 (missing from the lesson) which sets the context for what Paul was saying in this part of his letter.

Paul’s image of “a little bit of leaven in a batch of dough” was one that would not have had a positive connotation in the ears of Jewish listeners, but would have been similar to our expression, “one bad apple spoils the whole bushel.” To those accustomed to the tradition of finding and removing all yeast from the household at Passover, Jewish people would have been familiar with the idea that one bad ingredient can taint the whole product and ruin the celebration.

- In Matthew 16:5–12 and Luke 12:1–3, Jesus used the word “leaven” as a reference to the false teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. How does this help us understand the danger of “boasting” that Paul spoke of in 1 Corinthians 5:6a?
- We normally think of yeast as a good thing, just as we tend to think of our righteous acts as good works for which we deserve credit. In what way does faith, based on personal merit, contradict our hope in Christ?
- What does it mean for Christians to metaphorically, “celebrate the festival” of Passover? Who is our Passover lamb? In what sense does he alone deserve our praise and boasting?

John 20:1–18

Did you ever wonder how long it took Mary to see that the stone that sealed Jesus’ tomb had been rolled away? John tells us that it was dark; the sun hadn’t come up yet to illuminate the grave site.

So often we see what we want to see, or what we expect to see, and miss what is right in front of us. Imagine the thoughts that ran through her mind as she sprinted back to the disciples to report the absence of Jesus’ body. Jesus had said that he would be raised on the third day after his death. But it’s hard to remember things people say to us when we are in a moment of terror, panic, or confusion.

- How clear, concise, and informed do you think Mary’s message was in those first hours? What does that say about the kind of people God chooses to speak his message?
- Have you ever hesitated to speak of Jesus or share your faith because you hadn’t worked out all the answers in your own head? How does our witness depend, not on personal knowledge, but simply upon a Word from God?
- In what sense was Mary’s confession in verse 18 a simple witness to her experience of what God had done in her life?