

Monday
Matthew 28

Very early on the morning of the first Easter Sunday, three days after Jesus had died on the cross, something wonderful happened! While it was still dark, a great earthquake occurred. The ground rumbled and shook, and a couple angels appeared from heaven. One angel took the big stone from in front of Jesus' tomb, rolled it away onto its side, and sat on it. The guards who were stationed there were so frightened by all of this that they fell to the ground trembling with fear.

A little later that same morning, some women who were friends of Jesus walked to his tomb where he was buried. They were brining spices to put on his body, as a way to show how much they loved him. They were very sad that Jesus had died. But when they got to Jesus' tomb, they saw that the huge stone had been toppled away – and the angel was sitting on it!

The angel told the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead." The women looked in the tomb and saw that the tomb was empty. Jesus had risen, just as he had said he would!

The women were afraid because of the amazing things they saw, but they were also filled with joy. They started back to hurry away and to go tell their friends what had happened. All of a sudden, they heard someone say, "Greeting!" It was Jesus! The women ran to Jesus and knelt down to worship him. Then Jesus told them not to be afraid, but to tell his disciples that he was alive and would meet them in Galilee.

So the women hurried to tell the disciples the amazing news of great joy: Jesus is alive! Never again did they need to be afraid.

This is amazing news of great joy for us too! Because Jesus rose from the dead, we know that he is God and that his death on the cross paid for our sins. We never need to be afraid, because we know that he will raise us from the dead, and we will live with him forever!

- **What happened three days after Jesus died on the cross?**
- **What do we look forward to as a result of Jesus' resurrection from the dead?**

Close with prayer.

Tuesday

Matthew 28:1–10; John 20:1–9

After Jesus died on the cross, his friends buried him in a new tomb and rolled a stone in front of the entrance. After the Sabbath, some of the women who followed Jesus went to his tomb to anoint his body. They went to the tomb at about sunrise.

Meanwhile, there was an earthquake as an angel of the Lord came down from heaven. The angel rolled back the stone from the tomb and lay upon it. His appearance was like lightning. The soldiers guarding the tomb shook and fell over as if they were dead. When Mary Magdalene saw that the stone had been rolled away, she ran to Peter and John and told them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have laid him."

Entering the tomb, the other women saw an angel, who said, "Do not be afraid; for I know you are looking for Jesus. He is not here, for he is risen. Go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead." The women ran back to the city. They were afraid, yet filled with joy. They ran to tell the disciples what they had seen and heard.

Jesus rose from the dead. Someday, we too will have a resurrection day! Jesus will bring us back from death to life, just as he brought his own body back from death to life.

- **What would have happened if Jesus' tomb had not been empty on Easter morning?**

I praise you, Lord, for having power over death. Thank you for leaving an empty tomb so I, too, can have eternal life. Amen.

Wednesday
John 20:19–29

Immediately after Mary Magdalene saw Jesus alive in the garden near the tomb, she went back and told Jesus' closest friends and followers. They were excited to hear the good news – that Jesus was alive! That evening most of the disciples were gathered together in a room indoors. Everyone was there except Thomas. They kept the doors locked because they were afraid of what the Jewish leaders might do. Jesus had been taken away and killed – and they were worried that they might be in danger because they were friends with Jesus. Suddenly Jesus stood there among them! "Peace be with you," he said.

Jesus showed the disciples the marks of the nails in his hands and feet so they would not be afraid and would know it was really Jesus. The disciples were overjoyed to see that Jesus really was alive! Jesus told the disciples that, just as the Father had sent him, now he was sending them out into the world. He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Later – after Jesus had left them and Thomas joined the others in the room – the disciples excitedly told Thomas, "We have seen the Lord!" But Thomas could not believe the amazing news. He really couldn't believe it. He didn't. He said, "Unless I see for myself in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

Eight days later, the disciples were together again, including Thomas. Suddenly Jesus was in the room again, even though the doors were still locked. And again he said, "Peace be with you." Then Jesus came near to Thomas and said, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Now Thomas believed that Jesus was alive, and he said, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus said, "You have believed because you have seen. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." It is hard to believe that a person could die and come alive again. Thomas believed it when he saw with his own eyes that Jesus was truly alive. But Jesus knew that many people all over the world and for many hundreds of years would believe in the truth of his resurrection, even if they couldn't see him with their eyes.

We believe the truth of Jesus' resurrection through God's Word, the Bible. The Holy Spirit gives us eyes of faith so that we can believe and know that Jesus truly lives!

- **Why did Jesus show his disciples the marks of the nails in his hands and feet?**
- **Why did Thomas have such a hard time believing that the disciples were telling him the truth?**
- **Can we believe in Jesus even without seeing him? How?**

Close with prayer.

Thursday
Luke 24:13–35

On the third day after Jesus had been crucified, two of his followers were walking to a town called Emmaus. They were talking about Jesus. They were sad that he had died.

All of a sudden, Jesus came and walked with them. He asked what they were talking about. The men looked at Jesus but did not recognize that it was him. God kept them from knowing who it was.

The men told about Jesus and his death on the cross. They said he “was a prophet, mighty in deed and word. Our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.” Then the men told how some women had gone to Jesus’ tomb that very morning and had come back saying that his body was not there and that they had seen angels who said Jesus was alive again.

Jesus told them they were foolish and slow to believe, because the Old Testament prophets had spoken of this day many years before. Then Jesus explained to the men what God’s Word said about the Savior. He told them that it was part of God’s plan for the Savior to suffer, die, and come alive again. Then Jesus began with the earliest Scriptures written and showed how all of God’s Word spoke about Jesus and the salvation he would bring.

When they came to the village where they were staying, the men asked Jesus to stay with them. They sat down to eat their evening meal. As Jesus gave thanks to God for the food and broke bread with the men, he let them see who he was. The men knew it was Jesus! He really was alive again! What a happy surprise. Then Jesus disappeared. The men said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us as he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” They were so happy that they hurried back to Jerusalem to tell their friends that Jesus was alive!

The New Testament books are not the only Scriptures about Jesus; we also read about Jesus in the Old Testament. Moses and the prophets predicted that the Christ would come and be the Savior of the world. Jesus fulfilled all of those prophecies and promises.

- **Whose plan was it for Jesus to suffer and die on the cross?**
- **What did Jesus show his two followers from all of Scripture?**

Close with prayer

Friday
John 21

A few days after Jesus' resurrection, seven of the disciples went fishing together. They were certainly glad to be away from the memories of Jerusalem, but they were missing Jesus and trying to get used to life without him. They all were thinking of all the time they had spent and all the things they had learned from their leader, their teacher, their friend, Jesus. Now they were on their own. By this time, of course, they knew he had risen from the dead, but they still wished to talk with him like they always had.

As they fished, they reminisced about the lepers Jesus had healed, and the blind he gave sight, and all the things Jesus had told them and taught them. Their conversation was beneficial, but their fishing was a disappointment. None of them caught any fish.

As the morning light grew brighter, they noticed a man standing on the shore. Then, to their surprise, the stranger spoke to them, "Have you gotten any fish?" he called.

"No," they said plainly.

Then the stranger said, "Cast your net on the right side of the boat, and you'll get some." They did as he suggested, and they caught a lot of fish – enough that it was breaking their net! Then John knew that the man on the shore must be Jesus. It reminded him of the last time Jesus gave them a miraculous catch of fish on the same day when he first called him, Peter, and James to follow him and be his disciples. Peter jumped out of the boat to go to Jesus, just like he did when Jesus was walking on water.

When the disciples all got to shore to see Jesus, he was waiting for them with some fish he was cooking over a fire. As they shared a breakfast meal together, it was the same meal – fish and bread – that Jesus had twice used to miraculously feed thousands of people. They also remembered the last time Jesus served as the host of a meal when they all ate together at the Last Supper.

It was a day of reminiscing and remembering Jesus – what he had taught, what he had promised, and what he had done. Jesus' point of doing this with his disciples that day was to encourage them and us to not ever stop thinking about and talking about all the things Jesus has taught and done for us.

- **What has Jesus done for us?**
- **What helps you remember what Jesus has done for us?**

Close with prayer thanking Jesus for what he has done for us.