

“So Much Fear, Joy & New Life

—All At the Same Time!

Matthew 28:1-10, April 12, 2020; 10:00 am

Congregational UCC, Buena Vista, CO

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The Resurrection of Jesus

28 After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ²And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴For **fear** of him the guards shook and became like dead men. ⁵But the angel said to the women, “Do not be **afraid**; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he^ᵒ lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead,^ᵒ and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ This is my message for you.” ⁸So they left the tomb quickly **with fear and great joy**, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹Suddenly Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be **afraid**; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

FEAR AND JOY

Early in the **morning**, they **came**. Mary and “The Other Mary,” as she is so **quaintly** called in Matthew’s gospel! They came in **fear**. And likely **many other feelings** too. Deep **Sorrow**. **Despondency**. Despair. There were many **unknowns** in their situation. Much to **grieve**, wonder, worry—was there more suffering to come?

They’d just been through a week of **horrendous** events—a **week** like no other. They weren’t sure what they were **looking** for. They simply “**came** to see the Tomb.” And the Tomb was not what they **expected!** And their **fear** was **faced** head on. “Do *not* be **afraid**,” the **angel** told them. Things here are *not* as you **expected!**

And, in shock and disbelief, they “left the tomb quickly **with fear and great joy!**” What a combo! Talk about **mixed** emotions! For a surprise had happened and JOY came on the scene! God showed up in new ways, in their midst, and life was never the same again.

We’ve been through a **week**—many weeks—of **horrendous** events. We have known deep **sorrow**, despondency, despair. **Distancing** from our loved ones and normal life like we’ve never experienced before. We have known fear. Loss. Worry.

And, we come to this garden on Easter morning so *much* like those 2 Mary’s. And the Holy One meets us here. Tells us do NOT be afraid! “I am here. Among

you. In this extremely difficult and lonely place and time.”

And, like those Marys, we find that Easter has *not* been postponed. Not been canceled! That Jesus Christ is risen. He is risen indeed! Yet again. Even in 2020. Even in Covid19 season. We are in the midst of a holy combo—of fear and great joy—like never before!

For fear does not **cancel** out our joy—any more than Resurrection can be canceled by any human calendar or decrees. We, like those disciples on that first Easter, bring **all** the emotions we possess to the Tomb in the Garden, and we find God there—walking with us; talking with us. And we are sent out—in fear **and** great joy to tell one another and to *find* the joy—wherever we can!

MY JOYS:

As I looked around this week, setting aside fear of the unknown future and anxiety about loved ones far and near, I found joys—some little some big! I wonder if **you** might have experienced **similar** things this **week**?

The short list for me, is this:

- *horses
- *sunshine and warm days
- *time with loved ones (4-legged as well as 2!)
- *time in Creation—incredible beauty all around
- *Pasque flowers!
- *herons flying over our neighborhood!

*****Connecting in Community**

Right on the top of that list; on the first day of the week was **Palm Sunday worship**—on Zoom. Quite the trial run. It was not without glitches and some who, **sadly**, could not get on and join us. And some of you found that pretty **frustrating**, I know.

But, it was SO good and **heartwarming** to see many of your **faces** and catch up on each other and all the others we are **concerned** about. And, I *loved* hearing from everyone **afterward** how *glad* they were to be together in worship again!

We will keep **working** to make everything we do more inclusive and “**tech-easy**.” Until we can meet again.

Our goal is “**Connection Not Perfection**” as we move forward in this unprecedented time—exploring how to connect in **meaningful** ways.

Another joy was working with **Matthew** this week on this worship service and those in the **future**. I am in awe of his technical skill and curiosity and freakin’ grateful that we have him at CUCC to help us in this new frontier!

It was also a **funny** thing to me that our one real **glitch** in our rookie Zoom service on Palm Sunday was that Matthew’s puppy **Reily** unplugged their computer and kicked them off the worship service!

I had been so **diligent** about **security** and not getting **hacked**, that I'd **locked** the meeting, so I locked them out! Live and learn.

Into the week, **though** the sorrows and struggles were swirling all around, **Joys** were also discovered all around, if I but looked for them—right in front of me.

***Neighbors** reaching out and getting to know each other in ways we haven't in years! My neighbor (a recent widow) **hollered** out to me as I walked past the other evening and we had a lovely **conversation** in her long driveway. Other neighbors **wave** and check on each other far more than we used to. After all these **years**, we're really acting like **neighbors**!

*One of my greatest **joys** this week was combining **all** those things mentioned above! Taking my **natural** self out into the natural **world** and joining with loved ones on a **horse** ride in the **sunshine** and glorious blue sky and mountains (one horse **length** apart is a good **measure**!).

I experienced Easter that Day. I felt lighter in spirit afterward than I had in a long time. I couldn't even explain it! Nothing specific happened on that horse ride, except that I was with my loved ones in a beautiful, Holy place with my Creator. And my soul was resurrected and renewed with new life and joy!

Another day 2 friends from the neighborhood went on a **Triangle Walk and Talk**. With **masks** on and our

dogs and keeping appropriate **distance**—we talked about **life**, about **inspiration** during these **times**; about our **faith** and how it **imbues** our lives. We talked about our **parents** who have passed, and **losses** and **celebrations** of life and love that we have experienced over the years.

Adaptive Behaviors!

*I took Les and Mary some food the other day and they insisted I come inside for a minute to say hi. **Mary** was smack dab in the middle of the kitchen on a **stool**, and was tickled to tell me how Les was cutting her **hair**! Her new at-home **barber**!

*Other folks are having a fun time comparing pictures (or not!) of their **hair as the roots** grow out and coloring at the salon is not an option!

*People have created new **rituals** for us to be humans together and supportive. Like the 8:00pm **HOWL** every night—in solidarity with the **medical** workers during COVID. We were on the TELLS Zoom call the other night and my **dogs** decided to howl along with **Clarke** and the whole TELLS group heard their song!

And then, last night, on the news was a video from Evergreen where an **elk** had been caught **bugling** along with the howlers! What an amazing sound!

***Creativity** that is emerging is mindboggling. The new ideas that **help** the **common** good are what give me joy.

Factories changing quickly what they are producing.
Distilleries changing production from **liquor** to hand **sanitizer**! Melanzana clothing store in Leadville cranking out **masks**.

*People—right here in our own **church** and everywhere—cranking out **masks** at home to help **protect** us all. Thank you all!

*Congregation members **calling** each other every day; taking **food** and **medicines** to folks. *Being the Church*.

*Folks embracing their **authentic** selves, and **relaxing** about non-essential things (on a deeper level than just hair color and lots of other “doo-dadding up!”). Souls deciding that facades have no place in this time. We’re just **US**—pj’s all day on Zoom calls and walking our dogs and taking care of each other in any way that we can!

*Others getting brave and sharing their **creativity** and **talent** online as they write **poems** and reflections, record **songs**, give home **concerts**.

*There is joy in figuring out ways to **connect** in meaningful ways that we might never have thought of otherwise!

The Midland **Art Group** created an online Art Show and a Zoom call too—so we could **share** each other’s **art** and **learn** what **inspired** it; ooh and ahh and just

enjoy being a **community** of artists together.

*Finally, a funny joy for me is watching the church lot and seeing that the **compost** still goes on! There is new **life** in food waste. **Garbage** that is kept out of the **landfill** and turned into rich, **fertilizing**, nurturing **soil** for gardens and growing **food** for next year. The cycle of life!

And I loved to see people **stopping** by the church—still alive and well out there! The church **grounds** look a little too **quiet** right now, but the compost center is teeming with **life**!

RISEN CHRIST IN OUR MIDST

During the Maundy Thursday Service the other night, at Kirk of the Bonnie Brae, Pastor Selena suggested a spiritual practice for these Covid Times. Every time we wash our hands (for at least 20 seconds!), we can remember the story of Jesus washing the disciples feet, and invite Jesus to be with us in our washing.

Looking for the Risen Christ in our midst might mean imagining Jesus holding *our* hands while we wash them. Showering love upon us, commanding us to show that love to one another in every way we can—even if holding hands from a distance, or holding in our hearts.

That first Easter—the Jesus Christ Event: trial, death, tomb, resurrection—fundamentally changed the world forever. So now. The world is changed, is changing and will be changed forever more.

And you know what? *That's* no different from last year! For on Easter last year, we were sent out to find the joy all around us, and to look for the Risen Christ in our midst! The Risen Lord is still walking and talking and moving among us. Even in this Covid Time—Easter happens!

Jesus might be a little hard to **recognize**! He might just have a **mask** on, after all! But those **smiling** eyes and inspiring **spirit** will *still* be evident. You can't hide that behind a little **cloth** and **elastic**!

Jesus is NOT on **lock** down! The Risen Christ is walking through walls, barricades, rules and regulations. No county orders or quarantine requirements will stop the one who broke out of the Tomb and appears among us, spreading the love, the good news of new life, and joy that cannot be conquered by fear!

No more than life can be conquered by death, when Jesus is in the building and God himself is walking with us—in *every* trial and triumph!

And they went out with fear and great joy to tell the world! To tell one another that they, too, will see Jesus—in their midst. In the fear AND the joy.

Christ is Risen. Christ is risen, indeed! The Tomb is empty! The Garden is full of new life. The One we have been looking for IS among us! Happy Easter. Amen.