

Sermon April 5, 2026

Modern Testimony

"Mysteries, Yes!" by Mary Oliver

*Truly, we live with mysteries too marvelous
to be understood.*

*How grass can be nourishing in the
mouths of the lambs.*

*How rivers and stones are forever
in allegiance with gravity*

while we ourselves dream of rising.

*How two hands touch and the bonds will
never be broken.*

*How people come, from delight or the
scars of damage,
to the comfort of a poem.*

*Let me keep my distance, always, from those
who think they have the answers.*

*Let me keep company always with those who say
"Look!" and laugh in astonishment,
and bow their heads.*

~silence is kept~

Prayer to Bless Donations for NESAP

Holy One,
we lift up these gifts—
clothing, household items, dollars, hours, hope—
offered in love for neighbors we may never meet.

Bless each gift with purpose.
Let it become warmth for someone who is cold,
safety for someone who is afraid,
and dignity for someone who has been overlooked.

Bless the hands that give
and the hands that will receive.
May this offering strengthen the work of justice,

expand the reach of compassion,
and remind us that we belong to one another.

Use these gifts, O God,
to heal, to shelter, to restore,
and to build a world where all can thrive.
Amen.

Matthew 28:1-10

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And 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. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you."

So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him.

Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers and sisters to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

The Quiet Trembling of New Creation

Easter begins with a whisper.

That first Easter came with just two women walking toward a tomb with grief still clinging to their clothes, carrying spices for a body they loved. It begins with two women quietly whispering their sorrow... for the man lost and the hope crushed. The world is quiet in that hour before sunrise — the kind of quiet where you can hear your own heartbeat, the kind of quiet where hope feels almost impossible.

And yet, Matthew tells us that beneath that quiet, something is already trembling.

Before the women arrive, before they can even speak their sorrow out loud, the earth quakes. Not the violent shaking of destruction, but the subtle shudder of something new pushing its way into the world. A holy aftershock. A fault line of grace. The first tremor of resurrection.

The resurrection does not begin with human courage or faith. It begins with God moving in the dark. It begins with the earth itself trembling in divine disruption. It begins with a whisper that becomes a quake.

New creation is not proclaimed with a trumpet blast. It begins in the hidden places — in the soil, in the womb, in the tomb. It begins where no one is looking.

These women show up because love shows up, even when hope is gone. They show up because grief is not the opposite of faith; grief is often the doorway where faith walks in.

And the angel speaks to *them* — not to Peter, not to the religious or political leaders. These two women are the first witnesses to the Resurrection.

“Do not be afraid. He is not here. He has been raised.”

This is the first Easter sermon. The angel proclaims the good news to two grieving women who do not have positions of authority or power... the ones who are easily left stranded on the margins of society. This is not an accident... this is the pattern God lays on our lives.

New creation always begins with those the world overlooks.

And as the ground beneath us trembles and shakes, who are the ones who are bringing the good news today? Who are the ones left stranded on the margins, unheard and unseen... but bearers of such good tidings? The earth trembles in far-away places like Palestine and Iran; Rwanda and Somalia. The earth shakes and moves in big cities and small towns just like ours.

This Easter, we are called to be shaken to the core as New Life springs forth. Matthew writes that the ground quakes at both the crucifixion and at the

resurrection. These quakes are not signs of chaos; they are signs of divine reordering. They are the earth's way of saying, "The old world is cracking open. Something new is rising."

Sometimes resurrection feels like fear and joy tangled together, just like the women who run from the tomb "with fear and great joy." Sometimes resurrection feels like a whisper that grows into a quake.

And, we hear that sacred voice whispering to us: "Do not be afraid!" There is much in our world and in our lives that make our hearts skip a beat. Easter is about moving *through* our fears toward a deeper truth.

"Do not be afraid" is an invitation to trust the trembling... the places where something is shifting. As the earth moves, the stone is rolled away. Trembling means new creation is already breaking through.

As we move through the fear, we are not alone. Jesus meets the women, as they run down the road to tell the disciples. Jesus meets them where they are. Jesus meets us where we are. The Resurrected Jesus meets us on the roads we travel.

"Greetings!" Jesus says, as if this meeting on the road is as ordinary as any encounter with someone we love. Resurrection is not just a cosmic re-ordering of our universe, it is intimate. It is not only world-shaking; it is heart-shaping.

Death is defeated and relationships are restored!

This our story... a story where death does not get the last word. A story where the marginalized become the messengers. Easter is where God meets us on the road and calls us into a future we cannot yet see.

And the Easter story begins quietly. In the dark... With a whisper... With trembling.

Maybe that's how resurrection is happening in your life. Maybe something in your life is trembling — a relationship, a conviction, a calling... a grief you're finally naming, a truth you're finally trusting. Maybe the ground beneath you feels unsteady, not because you're failing, but because God is moving.

Maybe the whisper of new creation is already sounding in the places you least expect.

Resurrection is a communal experience. We are not called to sit in a quiet place and savor the moment. The good news of resurrection is meant to be shared. It is meant to ripple outward, trembling through communities, shaking loose the chains of despair, cracking open the tombs we've built around ourselves and others.

"Go and tell." The angel says. "Go tell!" Jesus calls out. We are called to go out and embody the Resurrected Christ. This is what it means to proclaim that we are Body of Christ. We embody the resurrection when we live as if new creation is not just possible... it's already breaking forth! We are the signs of Resurrected Love that our world needs.

This Easter, trust the trembling as if it is holy ground.

Easter begins with a whisper. But whispers can move mountains. Whispers can roll stones. Whispers can shake the foundations. Whispers can become the quiet trembling of new creation.

May you feel that trembling today. Trust it... follow it. And may it lead you — like the women — into a world where resurrection is not just a story we tell, but a life we live.

Amen.

SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION

The Invitation

***Hymn of Preparation**

The Great Thanksgiving

One: The Lord be with you.

Many: And also with you.

One: Lift up your hearts.

Many: We lift them up to the Lord.

One: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

Many: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

One: It is right, and a joyful thing,
to give you thanks, O God—
for in the beginning you brought forth life,
and in Jesus Christ you brought forth love made flesh.
On this day, you raised him from the grave,
breaking the chains of sin and death.
With all creation, we join the unending hymn:

Choral Response – we will say it

Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

The Story

One: Now, O God, with grateful hearts we remember Jesus.

Silence

One: We remember that he was laid in a borrowed grave.

Many: A heavy stone sealed up the tomb.

One: We remember that the women came,
early in the morning, on the third day.

Many: They did not find him among the dead.

One: We remember that his disciples met him on the road.

**Many: He opened the Scriptures, explaining everything,
and their hearts burned within them.**

One: They said to him,
"Stay with us, for it is evening."

So he went in with them.
And while they were at table,
he took bread, gave thanks,
and broke it for them to share.
Then their eyes were opened,
and they knew him in the breaking of the bread.

Prayer of the Spirit

**All: Come, Holy Spirit,
bless this bread that earth has given
and human hands have made.
Bless also this fruit of the vine,
created for our gladness.
Make them the food and drink of everlasting life,
body surrendered, blood poured out.
As we rejoice in the resurrection,
give us love for each other,
and make us servants of peace,
until your new realm is revealed
and every creature beholds it.
We pray in the name of Jesus, who lives
and presides at this table**

The Meal

The Prayer

One: Let us give thanks!

**All: Thank you, God, for life in the Spirit of Jesus,
for gladness in this bread and cup,**

**for love that cannot die,
for peace the world cannot give,
for joy in the company of friends,
for the splendors of creation,
and for the mission of justice you have made our own.**

**Give us the gifts of this holy communion—
oneness of heart, love for neighbors,
forgiveness of enemies,
the will to serve you every day,
and risen life that never ends.**

**In Christ's name we pray. Amen.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

Lord's Prayer

Sending Forth

One: Beloved, Your strength may fail but God's hand never will! Do not look for the risen Jesus only here, in the confines of this church building.

Many: We will seek the risen Jesus on the roads and in the streets, in all the pathways and byways of our lives.

One: Do not seek comfort in the familiar, but dare to risk the unfamiliar

Many: We know that Resurrection makes all things new!

One: Do not cling to all the old, expected notions about God, Jesus, Spirit, but go forth and celebrate **alleluia and amen!**