

Order of Service for April 4, 2021 for Recording

Prelude:

P: Alleluia! Jesus Christ is risen!

C: **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

Opening Hymn: “*Jesus Christ Is Risen Today*” - Hymn #457

Confession and Forgiveness: page 151

Service of the Word

Entrance Song: Choir???

Kyrie (Lord, Have Mercy): page 152

Hymn of Praise: “*This Is the Feast*” - page 155

Salutation: page 156

Prayer of the Day:

P: Almighty God the Father, through Your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ You have overcome death and opened the gate of everlasting life to us. Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of our Lord's resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by Your life-giving Spirit, who lives and rules with You and the Son, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 25:6-9

R: On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine- the best of meats and the finest of wines. On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth.

The LORD has spoken. In that day they will say, “Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Epistle Lesson: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

R: Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, He appeared to more than

five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all He appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Alleluia and Verse: page 156

Easter Gospel—Mark 16:1-8

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 16th chapter.

C: (Sung) Glory to You, O Lord.

P: When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see Him, just as He told you.'" Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

P: This is the Gospel of our Lord.

C: (Sung) Praise to You, O Christ.

Sermon Hymn: "*I Know That My Redeemer Lives*" - **Hymn #461 vs. 1-6**

Sermon: "*God's Ending*" - **Mark 16:1-8**

A doctor was dealing with a client, who is a wildly successful entrepreneur, rich, happily married, and well-regarded by his peers. The problem was the days when he felt depressed and run-down but unable to admit it. The only way to address it, he felt, was to regress, like a schoolboy, and look for permission from a doctor to regroup. "He knew he wasn't sick, but he'd go in and make something up," she says, "just so he could take a day off and be OK with himself."

She recognized he was suffering from a surging contemporary malaise. "He always had to demonstrate his worth to people," she continues. "He was thinking, 'I must exude this image of success and a happy life that everybody has come to know about me, and I don't want to ever change that image.' That's toxic positivity."

Call it FONNO, or fear of a negative outlook. Also known as “dismissive positivity,” it’s expressed as an overbearing cheerfulness no matter how bad things are, a pep that denies emotional oxygen to anything but a big grin.

You see it on Instagram, where the affective filter is always upbeat, usually followed by the hashtag #blessed. You hear it from the SoulCycle instructor exhorting every rider to swaggeringly sweat through the pain. It’s available from the newly anointed chief creative officer for Vital Proteins, actress Jennifer Aniston, who claims that renewal isn’t only a result of its powders: Instead, “it’s within us.”

Don’t think the pandemic has put that in check. The Federal Trade Commission has reported an uptick in Ponzi schemes during the pandemic—70% higher in the second quarter of 2020 than the year before. Ordinary Americans, casting around for inspiration and reassurance, became prime targets for these peddlers of perkiness. Or think of the boss who insists that colleagues start every Zoom meeting by sharing a piece of good news to help keep moods buoyant amid the gloom. It is found in sentences that start with those negating words “At least,” which are followed by a suggestion that however bad you’re feeling, at least you’ve got plenty else that should offset and outweigh it.

I bring all of that up because today is Easter. If anything is supposed to be optimistic and happy it is Easter. It is the ultimate happy ending. It can seem like the top story to end, “And they all lived happily ever after.” But is this truthful or just an example of “FONNO” or “toxic positivity.” Why couldn’t the early Christians have just put a positive spin on the story of Jesus by adding this story to turn the trauma of His death into something happy?

Swen, Lars, and Ole attended a funeral. They began to talk about what they hoped to hear at their own funerals. Swen said, “I would like them to say that I was a good husband and father.” Lars said, “I hope they talk about how I was an honest businessman.” Ole said, “I hope they say, ‘Heh! He’s moving!’”

Most scholars, even those that are atheists, have no problem admitting that a man named Jesus lived and then died. Historians certainly are convinced of that. The problem is Him coming back to life. People die all of the time. But who comes back from death? I am not talking about people who have been pulled off life support and then come back. We are talking about a man who was executed by the Romans, who were experts at that, who didn’t bother to break His legs because He was already dead, and just to ensure things pierced His side with a spear so that blood and water came out, showing us that they had pierced his heart—a mortal wound. And He had already been wrapped up for burial and was in the tomb for over 36 hours. He was truly dead! And those people don’t come back to life.

So is Easter just tacking a happy story to give us an escape from the real world? Is it just toxic positivity?

Every three years we hear the Gospels accounts from Mark's Gospel. This is one of those years. Unlike the other Gospels which tell about Jesus appearing to people alive, risen from the dead, that is missing in Mark. There are later additions to Mark's Gospel which include them, but it is pretty much a given among scholars that those are later additions. Mark's Gospel ends as we heard with the women running in fear from the empty tomb with only the message of the angel that Jesus has risen. There is no "and they all lived happily ever after."

What we see in Mark's Gospel and in all the Gospels is that Easter is different from putting on a positive spin. That is something humans do to compensate. But if there is anything clear in the Bible, it is that Easter was not a human thing, but God's work. If Jesus' followers were going to fake that Jesus rose from the dead, they would have taken the body. How could they do that when it was guarded by soldiers? And if they could do that, why did they leave the burial cloths neatly wrapped up? John tells us in his Gospel that it was as if His body just left the cloths where they were rather than them being unwrapped off His body. But even more for the disciples to have stolen the body would have taken solid planning. From what we know of Jesus' arrest and death, the disciples had run away. They were totally demoralized. They didn't have the time to regroup and organize such a plan. It might have been different if they knew ahead of time that Jesus would die, but they refused to believe that even when Jesus warned them several times. We also look at the very discrepancies in the accounts of Easter. Matthew and Mark have one angel at the tomb; Luke has two. Different lists are given for the women who went to the tomb. If you were going to make up the story, then wouldn't you have everyone agree to make the same story? This is a story that was *witnessed*, like the different stories police investigators will get about a crime, not because someone is lying, but because they each have a different viewpoint of the same thing. Also Jesus first appears to women. This might sound sexist, but in that world if you were going to make up the story of Easter, you would not have female witnesses because they were not seen then as credible witnesses.

Easter is not a happy ending, but God's ending.

"One of the best antidotes to toxic positivity is reexamining your value system and understanding that some of the best moments in life, when you truly feel good, are full of mixed emotions."

Happiness is something that happens to us in response to conditions. Our emotions, like happiness, go up and down. The solution is not to be always up. The solution is not to look inside of ourselves with our emotions, but to look to the constant of God and His love. The Bible refers to that as "joy." Joy does not mean that I am happy at that moment. That is what makes Easter so special, not because it is happy, but because it is from God, it is a real, lasting joy.

Prayer of the Church

P: Lord, in Your mercy

C: Hear our prayer.

Lord's Prayer

Special Music: Choir Anthem

Closing Prayer:

P: Almighty God, we have celebrated with joy the festival of our Lord's resurrection. Graciously help us to show the power of the resurrection in all that we say and do, through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C: Amen.

Blessing: (pastor) p. 166

C: Amen. (sung)

Closing Hymn: "*I Know That My Redeemer Lives*" - **Hymn #461 verses 7 & 8**

Postlude: