

## Order of Service for March 31, 2024

### 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

**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 16<sup>th</sup> 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:** "*Serving God without Knowing It*" Mark 16:1-8

Have you ever run into someone famous? In 1968 I went to a Baltimore Orioles game with a neighbor and his dad. As we got into the stadium, the dad noticed a player out of uniform. I really didn't know who he was, but I got his autograph on a pennant the dad bought me. Little did I realize that the pitcher had arm problems and wasn't playing. He had shown promise as a 2<sup>nd</sup> year player in 1966, but then got hurt. Little did I realize that his arm got better, and he became the best pitcher in Orioles history—Hall of Famer, Jim Palmer!

Life can hit us every now and then with amazing things like that. But for the most part our lives are about the routine—getting up for work and classes, keeping appointments, cooking

and doing laundry, chauffeuring kids to all their activities. So when we read in the Bible about stories filled with miracles and amazing things, it doesn't often seem to relate to our routine lives.

Yet, look at the story of Jesus' resurrection, the most amazing thing that ever happened. Mark's story begins with women buying spices "after Sabbath" which means Saturday evening. They couldn't do that before then because it was Sabbath until dusk, time when you couldn't shop. But we see them doing it as soon as they can, not wanting to wait until stores opened up Sunday morning. Why didn't they go to the tomb that night after getting the spices? They couldn't because it was dark outside. There were no electric lights in those days. But as soon as they could, at the crack of dawn, they went.

This shows how the women were doing what they could. They couldn't turn back the clock and prevent Jesus' death. They couldn't bring Him back to life. But at least they could give Him a decent burial. Yet, it was at that moment, when doing what they could as followers of Jesus, God revealed His greatest moment—Jesus' resurrection from the dead!

What the women were prepared to do became a seeming waste of time. There was no body to prepare for burial. Yet, what they were about to do is an important part of Mark's story. It shows us in a very real way what was on the mind of Jesus' followers when He died. The 11 disciples were in hiding, fearing they might be the next to be killed. And the women were doing what they thought they could do. But what wasn't on any of their minds is the possibility that Jesus would rise from the dead. The women's focus on preparing the body and their shock when they see the empty tomb and the angel tell them Jesus was alive. Their actions show us clearly that Jesus' resurrection was in no way planned by the disciples. It was the work of God alone!

Also by going to the tomb to finish the preparation of Jesus' body meant that they were the first to the tomb. The first disciples to see the empty tomb, to hear what the angel said, and later in Mary Magdalene to see Jesus arise, were women. If the story of Jesus' resurrection was something invented by the disciples, then why would they tell the story with women as the first to experience Jesus alive from the dead? Mark's Gospel tells us these women were "hysterical," a word which is based on the Greek word for "woman." In that worldview women weren't trusted as legal witnesses. But the fact that women were the first witnesses to Easter shows again that it was the work of God!

So much of what we do can seem like a waste of time, that it really doesn't matter. There are over 8 billion people on earth. Do you know how many that is? Think of how long it would take to count that if you counted 10 for every second. If you did that for 24 hours straight it would take you 100 years. There are 32 teams in the NFL with 53 on each team for a total of 1,696. That is .000056% of the population of our country. And that is for a sport that has 4.5 times the number of players that basketball teams have. And most of those players are not well known.

Online you can watch people quizzing each other about who is on whose list—the best athletes, richest entrepreneurs, or most talented. You'll notice that lists tend to center on recent people. For instance when mentioning the greatest actor no one says anything about Lawrence Olivier or Paul Schofield because they have been forgotten in time. Who of us even knows the names of our great, great grandparents?

So what difference do we make? Why are we here? Why were those women at the tomb? To serve God. Unlike those women we know how their story turned out. Jesus rose from the dead. They didn't need to prepare a body. Yet, they became witnesses to His resurrection. God turned their service from one of working with death, to sharing eternal life!

But we do not know what will happen tomorrow or the next. We do not know how our lives will play out. But unlike those women who went to the tomb that morning we know it turned out Jesus rose from the dead. That is our assurance that we, too, will rise from the dead on that last day. Until that time we don't know how it will all play out. We can feel like those women going to the tomb, doing what we can in situations that can seem hopeless: when a son or daughter drifts away from the church and tells us "I don't believe anymore;" when the doctor says, "It's cancer;" when the pink slip comes our way; when we feel the world caving in on us. We do what we can to serve God by serving others. And like those women going to the tomb, God can and will work through us, even and especially when we don't know it.

On a spring break service trip with students to Mexico we were visiting at a mission with a man who retired as a police captain. We spoke to him through one of our students who had spent a semester in Spain. When we asked him how he got involved with the church, his definite response was "Queso!" That is Spanish for cheese. The church mission was distributing cheese to the poor which brought him into contact with them. From there it grew until he became actively involved. A seemingly routine act of serving God by serving others made the difference.

Easter is certainly the assurance that we will rise on the last day. In the funeral service we speak of the "sure and certain" hope of the resurrection when God will change our lowly bodies. But Easter is not just about the end; it is about now! In Romans 6 when Paul describes baptism he says that "we were buried by baptism into Jesus' death." Then he goes on to say, "that just as he was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father." We might expect him to have said, "We too will rise on the last day." But he says, "We, too, may walk a new life." Notice the difference—"we will rise" (future tense) and "we may walk" (present tense). Right now what we do may seem so often like a waste of time that will soon be forgotten. It doesn't seem to matter. But it does to God!

So we go on in life with our often mundane tasks. But there is a difference. We are not just biding our time until the end. We are using what God has given us to help others. And as we do, God can use us just as decisively as He did those women on the way to the tomb.

## **Prayer of the Church**

P: Lord, in Your mercy

**C: Hear our prayer.**

## **Sharing Our Ministry**

## **Offering and Voluntary**

## **Service of the Sacrament**

**Preface:** p. 160

**Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy) and Prayer of Thanksgiving:** p. 161

**Lord's Prayer and The Words of Our Lord:** p. 162

**Pax Domini (The Peace of the Lord) and Agnus Dei:** p. 163

**Distribution:** Choir Anthem

*“The Strife Is O’er, the Battle Done”* - **Hymn #464**

*“Christ the Lord Is Risen Today, Alleluia”* - **Hymn #463**

## **Dismissal**

**Song after Communion:** *“Thank the Lord”* - page 164

## **Prayer after Communion:**

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:**