

Bible Study for Sunday April 21—Easter Sunday,

Our texts for this Sunday are:

Isaiah 65:17-25

John 20:1-19

We have spent the Sundays in Lent this year in a preaching/study/worship series called “Everyday Jesus Spirituality.” This is a study based off the Reverend Barbara Brown Taylor’s book called “An Altar in the World.” It is a series that is meant for us to connect our everyday faith with our everyday lives.

Week seven (Apr 21) is called “The Faith Practice of Starting Over”

Opening Discussion:

How might Easter be seen as starting over?

Read Isaiah 65:17-25

What stands out to you?

One interesting quality of this text is the ways in which it draws on pre-Exilic traditions. For example, in verse 17, when the author quotes God, saying, “For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth,” the Hebrew word for “create” (*barah*) is the same that is used in Genesis 1; in fact the same as the very first word of the Bible itself. The author could have used other words, such as “made” (*asah*), for example.

- Why was this an important word choice and what does it mean to start the description of this new world in Isaiah 65 just as the story of creation begins?
- How might this connect with what God is doing through the Resurrection?

Do you see “evidence” of this new world?

- If someone were to ask you how you saw the Body of Christ as ushers of this new world...how would you respond?

Read John 20:1-19

Why is it peculiar (and significant) that the first people (in all of the Gospel accts) to witness the empty tomb and the risen Jesus were women?

In John’s Gospel account of the Resurrection, Mary Magdalene was the first (and only one) at the tomb. What do you know about Mary and what would you like to know?

Why do you think Jesus chose Mary Magdalene to be the first to witness His Resurrection?

- Why do you think Jesus chose someone like her?

Mary's grief and pain initially prevents her from seeing Jesus who is standing right in front of her. What do you think makes it difficult for you to sometimes see, with the eyes of faith, the God who is right in front of you?

Mary thinks the Resurrected Jesus is the gardener. What does that suggest to you about the nature of His Resurrected body?

How is Jesus' Resurrection completely different from the resuscitation of his friend Lazarus in John 11:38-44?

What do you think (actually) happened on (and therefore through) this Easter event? In other words, how might you explain to someone why Easter is so pivotal to a Christian faith?

I had a seminary professor explain that Jesus took ALL of the sin of the world (all past-present-future sins) and absorbed them into Himself. Then when He died, He left them in the grave when He rose. What does it mean to you that Jesus was put to death and was buried for (and with) our sins? How might this be a "starting over" point for us?

What has convinced you of the reality of the risen Christ? How would you explain the reason for your faith to an unbeliever?

Isaiah 65:17-25

¹⁷For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. ¹⁸But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. ¹⁹I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. ²⁰No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed. ²¹They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. ²²They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. ²³They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord— and their descendants as well. ²⁴Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. ²⁵The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent—its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord.

John 20:1-19

20 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." ³ Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴ The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹ for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look^[a] into the tomb; ¹² and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." ¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew,^[b] "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."