

## *The Stone Has Been Rolled Away (11:00)*

The Rev. Dr. Scott Ramsey

Isaiah 65:17-25; Luke 24:1-12  
Easter Sunday – April 17, 2022  
Lewinsville Presbyterian Church

Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!

Jesus Christ has overcome sin and the grave, and therefore, we do not need to be afraid of anything, or anyone, anymore. The stone covering the tomb has been rolled away. Easter Sunday is the announcement that God is making the world new. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God is turning death to life, sin to redemption, turning enemies to reconciliation. Our Lord Jesus Christ transforms the pain of the world. Resurrection is all about transformation.

Transformation is the through line of the entire Bible. That's what this whole thing is about. Transforming enslaved Israelites into a priestly kingdom. Transforming exiles and refugees into the people of God. Transforming enemies into neighbors. Transforming water into wine. Transforming the state's execution of Jesus, an execution sought by religious leaders and thirstily desired by a violent mob, into the salvation of the entire world.

Transformation is the through line of the entire Bible, which means that transformation is the core purpose of the church. Transformation takes the very real conditions of brokenness, sinfulness, fear, anxiety, violence, grief, oppression, loss, and pain – does not deny those and does not avoid those – transformation takes those, stays with them, and engages them...with a peculiar blend of *urgency* and *patience*.

Transformation engages the hardest realities of life with urgency, because it knows that God did not create people to live in brokenness, sinfulness, violence, oppression, or pain. God created people to live in justice, mercy, love, and shalom. So transformation engages these hard realities with urgency.

But transformation also engages them with patience because it knows that healing and reconciliation and salvation are not ultimately in our hands. They are in God's hands. God's healing and justice and shalom are deeper than anything we could do, more complete than anything we could do, and longer lasting than anything we could do.

The transformative power of the resurrection is why the church enters into relationships with incarcerated persons, in the knowledge that Jesus came not for the righteous but for the sinful, and that God befriends those whom the world despises.

It is why the church dwells with people who are in grief, knowing that God is with them as well, working a deep and lasting healing in their hearts and souls.

It is why the church is active in the lives of children and teenagers, who live in the midst of enormous stress and pressures, knowing that God is at work in their lives, loving them and summoning them to particular vocations in our world.

It is why the church engages issues of racial inequality and environmental degradation, in the knowledge that God is building the beloved community, where God's creation is cherished and loved and known in its smallest details.

Transformation is the through line of the Bible, which means that transformation is the core purpose of the church. Christian hope and Christian faith are not about avoiding or escaping the pain of the world and the difficulties of life. Saying "Christ is risen!" is not a way of say, "La, la, la, la, la, la, I don't see any pain..." Saying "Christ is risen!" is to say, "God is present at all of the tombs and graves and sick beds of the world, transforming them into gardens of new life.

But we may observe that transformation and resurrection are not for the faint of heart. That's because transformation is about change, and change can be unsettling. Even a change as glorious as our newly renovated facility can bring its own unsettled feelings, as we have to find new places to keep things, as new flows of activity and new routines get established, as the way things are is not the way we remember them. *These things are just going to take some time.* Even while we know that our new facility is going to leapfrog our mission forward and is going to make possible a whole new era of outreach and hospitality and mission to our community. Change can be hard, transformation can be hard, but here's the news of Easter: God is at work in the world, and God will not stop until all things in heaven and earth are transformed into the complete and utter reconciliation, justice, and shalom that we read about in Isaiah 65. That day is coming, friends. The resurrection of Jesus is the guarantee that that is going to happen.

The stone covering the tomb has been rolled away. Jesus Christ has overcome sin and the grave, and therefore, we do not need to be afraid of anything, or anyone, anymore. Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Amen.