

EASTER SUNDAY
April 5, 2026

Matthew 28:1-10

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.

Now this is not something you see every day. But of course, today is not like any other day. We gather in memory and in celebration of the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is startling to consider what happened so many years ago, in a land far away. This is a season of surprises, of the unexpected.

We heard in our hymn: *Come ye faithful raise the strain of triumphant gladness*. It is not just joy and gladness after a long week or maybe even a nice meal this afternoon. The joy comes from the fulfillment of a promise, the promise that a king would come into our lives. The gladness arises from the giving of a new promise, the promise of everlasting life through Jesus' sacrifice.

God promised to send to us a king. But the king would not be of the regular sort. He would ride into the city on the back of a donkey, not in a chariot or astride a great warhorse. He would not come speaking of war or conquest, but of finally bringing peace to the land. He would not build palaces of marble or wear a golden crown. For Jesus was a very unlikely king.

Born in a manger, he grew up to work with his hands as a carpenter, a laborer. What king of kings is this? Born into a land conquered by the Romans, born into poverty? Working by the sweat of his brow? Have you ever heard of such a king?

One who lived and walked among the people. One who spent his days healing the sick and feeding the hungry. Certainly, this is no king with which they, or we, are familiar.

Why not? Why is this list of characteristics so hard to imagine in a king? When we think of our kings, our politicians and captains of industry, what do we imagine them doing? Do we think of them as healers? Do they feed those who are hungry? What do we expect of our leaders and how do they meet our expectations?

Are they in anyway like Jesus Christ? Could anyone be? Perhaps this would be asking too much of our leaders. Perhaps it is better to be realistic about such matters.

Can we really expect miracles from those who lead us?

When we gather on Easter morning, it is a question to consider. Can we expect miracles? We often look back upon the life of Jesus with the distant eye of history. Maybe we gaze longingly with the eyes of expectation as we consider what comes next. Our faith in Jesus may be strong

and our hope for the promise of new life may be sincere.

But remember, there is a trinity of great virtues we aspire toward: faith, hope and most of all love. How do these factors into our lives or our actions? As leaders, and as simply people. How do faith, hope and love factor into this all?

Jesus is our Messiah, meaning one who was chosen, one who was sent from God. But Jesus is also our teacher. His lessons are clear if not always in the forefront of our minds.

In fact, it is fairly rare to consider Jesus' actions as the model for living one's life. There is good reason for this, because Jesus did so much and asked much of his followers. And he was also asking that much of us, his followers far removed from the days of Jesus. Do we ever listen to what he said rather than focus only on what Jesus represents?

Today, we gather to celebrate Jesus' resurrection. We hold close to the promise of life everlasting. And, at least to me, it seems strange that these two prospects would be easier to accept than the teachings of Jesus. These miraculous ideas about resurrection and the promise of new life are what most people think about, what they focus on rather than trying to live following in the footsteps of Jesus and the disciples.

It would be hard to live so, without question. It would be hard to live a life dedicated to helping the poor and to feeding the hungry. It would be hard to heal everyone that is sick and to console all those who grieve. This would be difficult indeed.

So, I am giving you all a break this morning – think of it as a special bonus for showing up on Easter. You do not have to help the poor or to feed the hungry. You do not have to heal the sick or to console those who are filled with grief. It is all good.

Well, not really. It is not at all good. There is in fact much that is bad in our world. I thought about this problem last night after the darkness of Good Friday, the lights going out one by one in the church, the candles being extinguished as we read through Jesus' journey toward the cross.

We entered growing darkness and now we gather together in the dawning light of Easter morning. Even the smallest light can dispel the darkness. So, what might we achieve against the darkness, against the gloom and anxiety we might feel these days, by embracing the light? By casting forth the light of our lives? Maybe I am not letting you off, actually. Apologies.

How should we live our lives? Should we spend every waking minute caring for those in need? That seems like a bit too much for any one person to do. Should we forget all this helping the poor stuff completely? That seems a bit too selfish, too self-focused. How do we balance the two ends of a wide spectrum?

Here's a thought: you can be the judge. You can be the judge as to what is enough, perhaps on occasion using a certain person as a helpful example. Remember that Jesus healed many people, but not *all* those who were sick in the world. He helped many of the poor, but not *all* the poor in

the land. He traveled far and taught the multitudes, but he could not speak to everyone everywhere. And if he of all people could not get around to everyone, what hope do we have?

We have the *hope* of Jesus' good example.

Jesus knew that he would not be with us forever, so he had a plan. He asked his disciples to go forth to teach and to heal, to help and to console. And that was a good place to start.

But the disciples knew that they would not be around forever either. So, what did they do? They followed the same plan: they asked for help. They asked for help from those who chose to follow the way of Jesus, those who would become his new disciples. The disciples asked them to undertake some of the work. Not all of it, but a portion, a piece, just a bit.

It was a good plan, for many hands make light work. And it remains a good plan, for even our modest individual efforts gathered together can do much to improve the plight of others.

Baptism is a service of the church. Baptism is about welcoming a child, and sometimes an adult, into the community. It is a twofold ceremony, first to embrace that child of God and second to offer reminders to those who stand forth on their behalf. Here is a part of the blessing from that service: *Grant that this child, now dedicated to thee by our office and ministry may be endowed with heavenly virtues and saved through thy mercy.* It goes on to say: *We beseech thee to enable thy servants who are entrusted with the care of this child to perform their duty faithfully.*

We are brought into a fellowship, a community of people dedicated to the worship and to the service of God. We who have faith in the mercy of God and hope for the promise of life eternal. We who are charged with instilling a sense of virtue in the smallest of children and into our own lives. We who seek to be inspired by the good spirit of God and, who are in turn, asked to become the hands of God upon this Earth. Many hands make light work, or at least they make it lighter.

Now, does that mean that I personally have to do everything? To carry the weight of the world and all its sorrows? Not at all. We cannot do everything, but we can each do some. And so, each of us has a responsibility to be watchful, to consider those in need as well as to take care of our own needs.

There is an old saying that to those whom much has been given much is expected. And we have been given a great gift: the teachings of Jesus and the hope of life eternal. When you are given a gift, it is only polite to render thanks. In thanks for the gift of God's grace, we should live out our gratitude in any way that we can.

We can easily become overwhelmed by the scope of our problems, so we need to pace ourselves. We can quickly feel the need to close ourselves off to so much worldly suffering, but we need to fight that urge as best we can.

No one person or church can make everything better in Ukraine, in Haiti, in Gaza. But there is another old saying. The man who somehow moved the mountain began by moving small stones.

We do not have to move a *mountain*. But it would be a great kindness to look around for some of those small stones in need of moving.

Think about what you can do, large or small, to give thanks for the blessings of this life and in remembrance of the miracle of the Easter season. That miracle began when one stone was moved away from a tomb. In turn, we will be in good company if we take away some of the stones that might make others falter, that might block the way in someone's life.

We cannot always expect miracles in our lives, but together many people can gather and do miraculous things.

Go forth and be blessed. Go forth and be a blessing upon this world. *Amen*.