



Worship Service Theme: Easter

Helpful Elements:

White table covering

White lace or linen to drape on cross

Easter lily, fresh flowers, or other spring decorations

Large photo of cocoon and butterfly; photos or actual seeds, flower bulbs, pinecone, acorn, hard-cooked egg

[Special songbook for Easter](#)

(optional: Choral recording of Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus," or use the [sing-along video](#))

(Optional Prelude: All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name)

Welcome: Welcome and Happy Easter! Thank you for coming to our service today. My name is _____ and I'll be leading our worship time.

Today we celebrate the most holy day in the Christian faith, the day when Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead. On Good Friday, three days ago, we remembered the sorrow Christ's crucifixion and death; and today, Easter Sunday, the stone has been rolled away and Jesus is alive. Our white table covering symbolizes new life, and the veil on the cross symbolizes the graveclothes that were left behind in the tomb.

Christians all over the world are celebrating Easter today, and they often use a Call and Response for their Easter greeting. Let's try it: I will say "Christ is risen," and you all respond, "Christ is risen indeed."

Leader: Christ is risen!

Congregation: Christ is risen indeed!

[repeat pattern two more times]

Please join me as I open our time with prayer.

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, who through your only begotten Son Jesus Christ overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of the Lord's resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.¹

Let's begin by singing the Easter hymn, **Christ the Lord is Risen Today**.

Opening Hymn: Christ the Lord is Risen Today

Statement of Faith: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23, "The Lord is My Shepherd," together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Suggested Hymns:

Amazing Grace

Jesus Loves Me

First Reading: John 20:1-10. The story of Jesus' resurrection from the Gospel of John.

¹ Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and **saw** that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. ² So Mary ran and went to Peter and [John], and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."

¹ http://www.faithandworship.com/prayers_Easter.htm

³ So Peter went out with [John], and they were going toward the tomb. ⁴ Both of them were running together, but [John] outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ And stooping to look in, [John] **saw** the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. ...

⁸ Then [John] also went in, and he **saw and believed** ⁹ for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that [Jesus] must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to their homes.

(Let's sing a bit more before we continue the story.)

Suggested Hymn:
My Jesus I Love Thee

Second Reading: John 20:11-18

¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. ¹² And Mary **saw** two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. ¹³ The angels said to Mary, "Woman, why are you weeping?" Mary said to the angels, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."

¹⁴ Having said this, Mary turned around and **saw Jesus** standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to Mary, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, Mary said to Jesus, "Sir, if you have carried Jesus 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 Jesus, "Rabbi!" (which means Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for 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.**"

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Suggested Hymn:
I Know That My Redeemer Lives

Interactive Homily:

- Today, Easter Sunday, is the holiest day in the Christian year, as we remember and celebrate the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.
- The story from John's gospel says that Mary goes to the tomb when it's still dark. How does it feel to be wandering around out in the dark?
 - The dark can feel confusing, scary, empty, even hopeless.
- John's story of Jesus' resurrection includes a lot of words about *seeing*. What's the first thing that Mary sees when she gets to Jesus' tomb?
 - Mary sees that the stone has been rolled away.
 - She then runs to tell the followers of Jesus.
- Mary then runs to tell the disciples. After Mary's report, Mary, Peter and John run to the tomb. What do Peter and John do and see?
 - They look into the tomb – and see that it's empty. Only the graveclothes are left.
- I wonder how Mary, Peter, and John must have felt at this point. How would you feel if you had been to a funeral a few days prior, then went to visit the grave and saw that it was empty?
 - Many possible feelings: sad, confused, horrified, scared, wondering what happened; still in the dark.
- Interestingly, the scripture says that John looked in "and believed," even though he and Peter "didn't yet understand the Scriptures that Jesus must rise from the dead." Have you ever had that feeling that your eyes must be deceiving you? Let's think of examples of hard-to-believe sights ... for example, against all outward appearances:
 - What does a cocoon turn into? A butterfly.
 - What do dead-looking flower bulbs become? Beautiful flowers.
 - What emerges from a dry, hard eggshell? A baby bird.
 - What happens to a tiny, dry acorn? Becomes a giant oak tree.
 - Every dark morning, what happens? The sun comes up.
- After Peter and John leave the scene, Mary sees Jesus ... although in her confusion and darkness, she thinks he's the gardener. What does Jesus say to her?
 - "Mary." Jesus calls her by name – and when Mary hears her name, what happens?
 - Mary turns and sees – she recognizes Jesus.

- How does it feel when someone calls you by name? Who knows your name?
 - You know you're not talking to a stranger; you're with a friend. You feel *seen*, understood.
- Mary becomes the very first person to *hear, see, and fully believe* in the resurrected Lord and to report Jesus's resurrection, that he rose from the dead just as he said he would. What is Mary's message when she reaches the disciples?
 - "I have *seen* the Lord." Not "a vision or a dream of the Lord" – she knows she has heard and seen Jesus in the flesh.
- Jesus calls each and every one of us by name, from darkness into light, from confusion to peace, from death into life. He sees YOU and knows YOU.
- And we, too, can say, "I have seen the Lord." Where have you seen (and do you see) God in your life today? How is your life different because the Lord sees and knows you?

Let us thank God today for the glory of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and that God sees us and gives us eternal life through his victory over death.

(Silent Prayer) Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord's prayer together:
Lord's Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Suggested Hymns:

**Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus
 Glory, Glory Hallelujah**

Reading: An Easter Prayer²

Lord God, we thank you.
 From seeds, you bring growth.
 From winter, you bring spring.
 From despair, you bring hope.

² http://www.faithandworship.com/prayers_Easter.htm

From anxiety, you bring peace.
And from death, you bring life.
We are often not the Easter People
that we should be,
living in the certain knowledge
of your great mercy and love.
Distracted by the world around us
we fail to hear your voice,
or hide when faith is challenged.
Forgive us, we pray.
We will keep our eyes fixed on you, Lord,
and with you at our right hand
we shall not be shaken.
Amen.

**Suggested Hymn:
Crown Him with Many Crowns**

Now receive the closing blessing on this glorious day. Let's repeat our Easter greeting three times:

[leader:] Hallelujah! Christ is risen!

[response:] Christ is risen indeed!

[repeat pattern twice more]

How blessed is this day, when earth and heaven are joined and humankind is reconciled to God!

May the light of Jesus shine continually to drive away all darkness. May Christ, the Morning Star who knows no setting, find his light ever burning in our hearts— Christ, who gives his light to all creation, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever.³

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Suggested Hymn:

³ adapted from the Book of Common Prayer 1979, the Protestant Episcopal Church

To God Be the Glory

[Optional: Sing Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" using the [sing-along video](#), or simply play the choral recording while greeting people and collecting hymnals]