

Sunday, April 9, 2023 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church

**Bible Study
Matthew 28:1-10 and John 20:1-18
Easter Sunday**

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). In groups of two or three, have participants respond to the question, “How has the season of Lent prepared you for the Easter celebration?”

Matthew 28:1-10. Context. Matthew tells the story of the empty tomb and the encounter with the risen Jesus as do the other gospel accounts. He adds to the drama by having the women witness a second earthquake (the first occurred when Jesus breathed his last), an angel looking “like lightning” rolling back the sealed stone (in Mark, the women encounter a “man” in the empty tomb, in Luke, “two men in dazzling clothes,” in John, Mary Magdalene finds nothing but the empty tomb – the stone had already been rolled away in all three accounts), and the guards struck down (no guards at all in the other accounts). As in Mark’s account, so in Matthew’s: none of the other disciples witness the empty tomb (in Luke, only Peter; in John, Peter and John). By contrast with their experience of the empty tomb, Jesus approaches them with no fanfare and no special appearance. Finally, Matthew records no other post-resurrection appearances of Jesus to the disciples (no upper room through closed doors, as in John; no road to Emmaus, as in Luke) except in Galilee – known as “Galilee of the Gentiles,” anticipating the spread of the gospel to all peoples. In all the accounts, the women are the first to proclaim the good news of Jesus’ resurrection, the first to believe.

John 20:1-18. Context. Mary Magdalene (literally, from Magdala, a town on the Sea of Galilee) was a well-to-do woman who was one of Jesus’ closest disciples. In John’s Gospel, it is Mary Magdalene who discovers the empty tomb and tells Peter and John. After Peter and John leave the tomb, Mary remains to mourn for Jesus. It’s then that she encounters first the angels in the tomb, and then the risen Christ in the garden, whom she mistakes at first for the gardener. When she realizes who he is, she tries to “hang on” to him, as though nothing had changed. But Jesus says to her, “Do not hold on to me,” as though to say, “I will continue to be with you, not in the old way but in a new way.” Mary Magdalene is the first to proclaim the Good News of Jesus’ resurrection, and she has often been called “the apostle to the apostles.”

Read Matthew 28:1-10; and John 20:1-18

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the text?

Read Matthew 28:1-10; and John 20:1-18 again -

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

Some reflection questions –

- Where do the first witnesses of the Resurrection show confusion and where do they show belief? [20:9, 15]
- How might the fears and expectations of Jesus’ followers after witnessing Jesus’ death shape their reaction to the news of Jesus’ resurrection?
- What questions about the Resurrection would you like to ask?
- What is your understanding of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead?
- How would you explain the hope and joy of Easter to a friend or coworker?
- How might you continue to celebrate Resurrection this coming Easter season?

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, end by praying the following or a similar prayer:

God of Resurrection and new life: You sent Jesus into the world to suffer, die, and be raised from the grave for the benefit of the world. Help us to experience the transforming power of the Resurrection in all our relationships. **Amen.**

And now we pray The 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.

Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.