

Easter Sunday 2026

Early in the morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went on a mission...a mission to find hope.

We've all been there, right?

A time when our loved ones were ill, maybe we'd also lost someone we deeply cared about.

Perhaps it was a time when our finances were stretched too tightly, maybe some of us were concerned about where the money would come from to put food on the table, gas in the car, or pay that huge, monumental utility bill. Some of us wonder if we will ever have the opportunity to purchase our own home or leave a legacy for our children.

Was there ever a moment when you experienced job insecurity? Or you were stuck in a long-time feud with a family member or maybe it was that next door neighbor that continued to do that thing that drove you crazy!

If you're younger person, maybe you have experienced trouble at school or a problem with your friends, and you didn't know the right direction to turn.

Now, if I still haven't named one of the struggles you've personally endured...how about this one? Remember that time in 2020, when we were all shut up in our homes, separated from all of our friends and neighbors and churches, when our usual activities and routines were completely turned upside down. It was dark and lonely wasn't it?

Whatever the circumstance, whether we are young or old, we've all had moments in our lives where the world felt dark, cold, lonely, or difficult to bear.

It's not that far a stretch for us to imagine ourselves in this moment with Mary Magdalene. She was unable able to sleep because of her grief and shock over the events that recently happened, and she embarks on a mission...a journey to return to the place where hope was last found... the tomb where they laid her beloved Teacher and Friend, Jesus, to rest.

We can appreciate her dismay and despair upon finding the tomb empty.

She pleads: Where, or where, have you taken my Lord?

It must have felt like it was adding insult to injury. First they beat him, and mocked him, and then they killed him, and now they've taken his body.

Can you feel her angst churning in your belly?

I can. Because I've had these moments in my own life, where I've thrown my hands towards the sky and asked, God, where have you gone? How could you leave me? Why did you let this happen?

When it feels like the darkness is all around us, the question for all of us, I suppose...is where do we find our hope and joy?

I have a little story to share with you this morning. It's a story of two sisters, Cheryl and Sandy. Both are former parishioners who participated in a little podcast adventure during COVID. The idea behind it was that in listening to the podcasts, parishioners would be able to encourage and build up each other during the separation of COVID, and it was an added bonus that they could hear the voices of their friends in spontaneous conversation.

Sandy and Cheryl agreed to participate in the podcast, but only if, I would interview them together. One of the questions, was where do you find hope during this time?

To be honest, I don't remember Cheryl's answer, but I do remember Sandy's. (It will become clear in a moment, why I remember.) In her answer, Sandy told a story about how she had started grocery shopping, delivering meals, and collecting the trash for some of her homebound neighbors and transporting it to the dump for them. "It just brings me so much joy," she said over and over.

Afterwards, it became a family joke. Cheryl (the younger sister) would say, if you're looking for joy, you won't find it here. You'll have to call Sandy. She's all about joy, joy, joy — even when she takes out the trash. And, everyone would burst into laughter.

It was a teasing that only sisters could get away with.

There is a message here in that story, and one buried in our Gospel lesson this morning.

Hope and joy, that come from God, are not always in the places or the faces we expect to find them.

More often than not, we go headed down the wrong track, sometimes fast and furious, looking in all the wrong places.

When Jesus first appears to Mary, she doesn't recognize Him. And, when she finally recognizes his voice, we experience her surprise and elation, as new life — resurrected life — is infused into her spirit.

You can feel her goosebumps can't you?

This is indeed the miracle and the mystery of Christ's resurrection. In defeating death, Jesus has offered all of us (including Mary Magdalene and the first disciples) a pathway...a new pathway...to reconciliation, to hope, and to the joys of eternal salvation.

The miracle, the mystery, and the promise of Easter is that somehow, Jesus still comes to us today, in 2026, from beyond the grave, especially in our darkest moments of despair and struggle.

THIS is the hope and the promise of the Resurrection; that in becoming a follower of Christ, we are given grace and strength to continue on our walk about the world; a world that is all too often, filled with darkness and disappointment. And on our journey, WE TRUST. We trust that somehow, somewhere, the joy and light of God will lift us up from muck and the mire. That our hearts and spirits will be infused with whatever we need to carry on. And, on top of that, we will be given grace to continue to grow in love, mercy, in hope, in kindness as we journey with Christ along the way.

How incredible is that? How unexpected is that?

How blessed are we to have this path of reconciliation to God and each other available to us? How blessed are we that God's renewal of life and love seeks us out when we need it most? How blessed are we that Christ continues to make us aware of the joy that can be found, even in the most surprising and unexpected places?

How blessed are we?

In a few moments, we will renew our Baptismal vows, as is our tradition in the Episcopal Church at the Easter Vigil and on Easter Sunday. It serves as a reminder of where we find hope, where our true joys are found...as members of one Body, throughout the earth, members of one Lord of all.

Together, we proclaim victory over death. We believe in the promises of the Resurrection. We rejoice in the life-giving salvation of our good and loving Lord, who forgives, is merciful, and kind, and welcoming to ALL.

Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

You know the response, right? Let's hear it...

Alleluia, Christ is Risen!

The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Amen.