

04.20.25 ~ Easter Sunday
“The Living Hospitality of Resurrection”
The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

Isaiah 65:17-25 ^{NIV}

New Heavens and a New Earth

¹⁷ “See, I will create

new heavens and a new earth.

The former things will not be remembered,
nor will they come to mind.

¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever
in what I will create,

for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight
and its people a joy.

¹⁹ I will rejoice over Jerusalem
and take delight in my people;
the sound of weeping and of crying
will be heard in it no more.

²⁰ “Never again will there be in it
an infant who lives but a few days,
or an old man who does not live out his years;
the one who dies at a hundred
will be thought a mere child;
the one who fails to reach a hundred
will be considered accursed.

²¹ They will build houses and dwell in them;
they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

²² No longer will they build houses and others live in them,
or plant and others eat.

For as the days of a tree,
so will be the days of my people;
my chosen ones will long enjoy
the work of their hands.

²³ They will not labor in vain,
nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune;
for they will be a people blessed by the Lord,
they and their descendants with them.

²⁴ Before they call I will answer;
while they are still speaking I will hear.

²⁵ The wolf and the lamb will feed together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox,
and dust will be the serpent’s food.

They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,” says the Lord.

Leader: These Words of Prophecy Are from God.

People: Thanks be to God!

Luke 24:1-12 ^{NIV}

Jesus Has Risen

¹ On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. ⁵ In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷ ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’” ⁸ Then they remembered his words.

⁹ When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. ¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. ¹² Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

1 Corinthians 15:19-26 ^{NIV}

¹⁹ If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. ²⁰ But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in turn: Christ, the first fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. ²⁴ Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Leader: These Wondrous & Perplexing Words Are of God.

All: Thanks be to God!

Please pray with me:

Loving and faithful God, we have journeyed with your son, Jesus, during this Lenten season, studying your word through prayer, devotions, and fasting. We proclaimed Glory and Hosanna last week as he rode into Jerusalem. Friday, we witnessed his unjust but necessary beating and judgment from Pilate and the people. Now we accept the consequences of our forgiven sin through his torture and yet this joyful resurrection day! We were not prepared for the darkness of that Good Friday or the joy that comes today with an empty tomb. Lord, we are **ready** to receive your redemption and witness your resurrection! Speak through my words as you renew our hope. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

For those of you who could participate, thank you for contributing and spending Good Friday with us. And now, ***Happy Easter! Hallelujah! He is Risen! He is Risen, indeed!*** We have already felt that joy in music and song, so we have many reasons to rejoice. We are glad to be here in worship together in freedom and safety, as we think about Christians around the world celebrating this special day united in faith but often in secret. For the experience of Lent, Holy Week, and for our many blessings, we give thanks.

The prophet Isaiah speaks for the Lord: “See, I will create new heavens and a new earth . . .” After hearing the challenging story in Luke 22 and 23 of “Good Friday,” we can imagine how important this prophecy of better times was, literally and spiritually. It is the same for us with global and political climates, natural disasters, human violence, famine, poverty, disease, and fear. The news overwhelms us at times, so we must stay centered in our belief in Christ Jesus, using all the tools at our disposal: prayer, Scripture, service, gratitude, contemplation, worship, and the fellowship of believers in the church. There **shall** be joy and new life! In God we have the **hope** of salvation, beauty, agape love for one another, and divine intervention. Even the wolf and the lamb will feed together. Hospitality will bring people together, as it did Friday with our “Disciples’ Lunch.” Healing results as new relationships in Christ develop.

Let’s review. Jesus was tried but found innocent, was sent to Herod and found not guilty, yet was returned back to Pilate who succumbed to citizenry pressure wanting condemnation. After the tortuous crucifixion,

the guards had to verify that Jesus was dead; they had nowhere to take him. Joseph of Arimathea, a Sanhedrin Council member who awaited God's kingdom asked Pilate for Jesus' body. He had not consented to the Council's decision but wanted to comply with Jewish prompt burial laws. Some sources say he was a secret disciple, and we do know that he loved Jesus and respected him because he wrapped the body with linen cloths and donated his personal tomb.

But how can we say that living hospitality had anything to do with the resurrection? Well, this first act of generosity donating a rich man's tomb to a man of controversy with no means was a submissive act of hospitality to God and his Son. Joseph had people to help him to place the body in the rock cave and protect it with a large stone to cover it. There was fear that people would steal him away and claim a divine intervention, so the authorities even placed a guard or two there to keep watch. Vandalism and grave robbing were typical in that period.

Three women who had witnessed the crucifixion were the same who came the next day to the tomb: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome. They brought more herbs, oils, and spices to anoint Jesus' body for practical and ceremonial purposes. This was the second act of living hospitality surrounding their death practices; it was performed out of love and respect for their teacher. They arrived very early in the day but had forgotten about the huge stone covering the tomb. When they arrived, however, the stone was rolled away, and the body was gone! These devoted women were the first to witness the resurrection but did not understand it. They did not go there believing in resurrection, or to check and see if the tomb was empty. The fact that they took spices

along to anoint the decaying body shows what they expected to find, despite six resurrection predictions in Luke. So, the first people who had to be convinced of the resurrection were the disciples themselves.

The third act of living hospitality at the resurrection was the welcome of the women by two angels. The angelic appearance frightens them, but they still bow to the ground in reverence. “*Why do you look for the living among the dead?*” the angels ask. We do not know how they replied, but we do know they ran to get the other disciples. I imagine as they ran, they discussed and reconciled their minds with the experience and came to believe the resurrection on the way. Their testimony to the disciples was sure and confident as our faith stories are, yet the men could not believe that Jesus was not in the tomb. The other disciples had to see for themselves. Even when Peter came to the tomb and saw what the women said was true, he could not quite understand.

A fourth act of living hospitality at the resurrection was having a guest present to receive such generosity. It was fitting that Peter’s presence fills that role since he was the one who denied knowing Christ three times! He might have felt guilty or shame remembering his denials. Other disciples were also present, but instead of feeling the hospitality of promised eternal life, they began to fear what people would say or how they might be accused of trickery. Peter’s eye-witness account was perplexing, but I believe it solidified his faith and memory of all of Jesus’ teachings and prophetic words: “You are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18).” Although a fisherman by trade, Jesus and this miracle had transformed him.

The apostle Paul was transformed by Jesus on the road to Damascus and in our third passage, he writes to the Corinthians to try to explain the resurrection. Many questioned what was said. In the first-century Greco-Roman world, there was little hope of life after death, so it was a confusing and dangerous concept. Some believing Corinthians could accept that the son of God was risen back to heaven, but they could not comprehend how they personally could be raised with Christ. Paul argues skillfully and intellectually in his letter but eventually must admit that it is his personal experience and testimony that assures the resurrection, just as it is the disciples' and the women's personal experience and witness that confirms resurrection at the tomb.

There are many practical hospitality experiences we have all had at loved ones' homes, restaurants, or hotels, but no matter what one says, it is only the experience and the storytelling of the hospitality that makes it true and believable. Once the experience is over, there is no physical proof only the memory, perhaps a photo, and the story of the experience that counts – today, it's called a Yelp review or something similar. That is all we have to explain the resurrection! Story, witnesses, angels, visuals, and feelings of transformation and divine resurrection. Is that living proof **enough** for you? I hope so. We do have Scripture to assure us and fellow believers to remind us. Hallelujah! He is Risen! He is Risen indeed! As we sing, let us remember the birth, death, and resurrection of the incarnate Jesus. In all, let us rejoice and share our stories of resurrection! Amen? Amen! ||

Let us pray. Dear Lord, we thank you for your sacrifice on the cross and your glory of the resurrection. May we embody your spirit through our

actions and spiritual gifts. Let us be loving enough to serve others and to share our faith and resources with those in need of you. Guide us, love us, and have mercy upon our sins. We thank you Lord for this special day. In your name, we pray, Amen.