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April 2025

## ***Worship and Discipleship by Margo Geesing***

### ***“Lent to Easter and Beyond: We are an Easter People”***

We are nearing the end of Lent and then we will go through the Three Days so we can get to Easter and then continue into the Season of Easter. This is an important process. While we will go with Jesus as he enters Jerusalem to the glad cries of followers, go to the table with his closest friends for his Last Supper, and travel through the trial, road to Calvary, the Crucifixion, and finally the burial of Jesus we need to get to Easter: the empty tomb and beyond simply because otherwise, if we stay at any of those other places, our faith will be useless. We are all born. We all, at some point in our lives do something that we are praised for. We all eat. We all go through trials and tribulations. At some point we will all die. What we do not do, what we cannot do, is rise from death by our own power. Even though there are numerous stories of resurrections in both the Old and New Testaments they ALL involved someone else praying to God and/or touching the person. Jesus did it all on his own! Even if we stay at the empty tomb, which is a wonderful place, we don't get to NOW. We need to continue to the after Easter point. So, let's get started...

Have you ever done an act of kindness that someone else misinterprets? The first Sunday of April has just that happen in the Gospel of John. Mary (of the Mary and Martha / raising of Lazarus fame) anoints Jesus's feet with costly perfumed oil. This was just after Jesus raised Lazarus. It was a kind way of thanking him for the gift of her brother back. Judas chose to complain about her “wasting” the oil. *Perhaps this week we can work on what we assume about the actions of others.*

The second Sunday of April is Palm-Passion Sunday. This is the beginning of Holy Week. We have two Gospel Lessons on this day, both from Luke. The first is from chapter 19 and tells of the entry into Jerusalem and the praising of God by the people because of the powerful things that Jesus had done. It includes the admonishment from the Pharisees for Jesus to quiet his followers. The second Gospel Lesson begins in chapter 22 with the Last Supper and continues through to the end of chapter 23 with the burial of Jesus. These Gospel Lessons take us on a wild ride. We begin with Jesus being praised as a king, then he is a priest, a servant, a man in prayer and agony, a betrayed man, a healer, an arrested man, a man denied and abandoned, a man on trial, a “criminal”, a man who still forgives, and finally, a man who has died. One of the things we can take from this is a realization that Jesus, although God, loved us and the Father so much that he was willing to endure this, as a man, for our sake. *This week be*

*conscience of those moments of our own pains: accept them without complaint or anger; join them with Jesus's own pains as a gift back to God.*

Then we come to Easter! There are two choices for the Gospel for this day. In the Gospel of Luke, we have the women returning to anoint the body of Jesus and finding it empty. They are first puzzled, then fearful, and finally, amazed. They then go to tell the disciples who don't believe them until Peter goes and checks. In the Gospel of John, it is again Mary of Magdala that begins the announcement of Jesus's resurrection. In this Gospel Jesus actually appears to Mary and sends her to the disciples. *This week, be conscience of those moments of amazement in your own life, those moments of a miracle happening (they still happen although they are usually small things) and thank God for them.*

The last Sunday of April we have the story of Jesus's first appearance to his disciples and the second one when Thomas is with them. We all have those moments of doubt when we say, I won't believe it until I see it! We are like Thomas in those times. I can identify with Thomas. He thinks: *I know that Jesus died, how can you have seen him? This is a hoax, and one in very poor taste.* So, yes, I would want to see it myself. I would want to touch him. We have an advantage over his followers of the time, we have their witness to the resurrection. What does that mean to us today? If we believe in the resurrection, if we embrace faith in the Risen Lord, if we call Him Lord and Savior, if we call His Father, "*Father*", if we have the Gifts of the Holy Spirit within us, if we have the gift of faith, if we have the Breath of Life within us, if we allow Him to have a claim on us then there needs to be a response from us. The one thing we cannot say; we should not say is, "*Yes, I believe*" and then walk through our lives as if we did not. *The other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord."* The difficulty of trying to go it alone in faith is that we only see ourselves – our own thoughts, reflection, wants, and needs. For Church to happen, we need a community. There are times in our own lives where we do not see the Lord working and we need the community to say, "*We have seen the Lord.*" And sometimes we need to be the one to say it to others. Like Thomas, we also should be crying out to Jesus, "My Lord and my God!" We are blessed simply because we do believe without actually seeing Jesus in person! This is what faith is: belief in what is unseen. *This week it is time to focus on our own belief in the Risen Jesus. We need to remember that our belief is in Jesus and his redemption. We need to remember that people come and go throughout our lives but the love of Jesus is constant.*

We have made it through Lent and we are now in the time of Easter! We are an Easter People. Our faith tells us that Jesus, risen from the dead by his own power, is the reason for our faith. We celebrated the Lord's birth at Christmas, we celebrated the Lord's presentation to the world at the Epiphany, we celebrated the Lord's baptism by John and the beginning of his ministry with the calling of the disciples, we celebrated the Lord's temptation in the desert, we celebrated the Lord's transfiguration, we celebrated the Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, we celebrated the Lord's Supper on Maundy Thursday, we celebrated the Lord's death on Good Friday. All of these, although special times, are not why we have faith in Jesus Christ. We are all born, we all celebrate milestones in our lives, we all are tempted, and,

one day, we too, will die. So did Jesus. The thing that Jesus did that made him different was that he rose from the dead by his own power. None of us can do that. No one in history has done that; except Jesus. Easter. The celebration of the resurrection of Jesus is what is the absolute core of our faith. When we were baptized, we were baptized into the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. So, it's time to celebrate! It's time to sing "Alleluia!"