

“Into the Darkness, Finding the Light”
“The Gift of Life”

We begin Easter. While Lent is forty days, the Celebration of Easter is fifty days, ending with Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit. During these Easter days, our gospel readings will mostly focus on the experience of the disciples and the appearances of Jesus. Easter more than a day, it is a gift and a way of life. Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen, Indeed!!! ---
Pastor Cindy

Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon: **“The Gift of Life”**

Prayer for the Week

God of amazing surprises and powerful love, your Easter victory is our sign of hope. Your Easter triumph is our promise of new beginnings. Your Easter alleluia is unexpected, undeserved and graciously welcomed. We need your Easter—The promise that dawn brings new possibilities, the assurance that your love is stronger than death, the hope that every day might be touched by Easter joy! Let us feel the possibilities for living life surrounded by your powerful love and surprising grace. We pray in the name of our Risen Lord and Savior, Jesus. Amen

This week's sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

Study Guide

Monday, 4/17/17 Matthew 28: 1-8

Here is Matthew's account for that first Easter. Please read this whole passage several times. What emotions did the women experience? Was the early morning cold or cool? What did the rumbling sound like? Feel like? In your mind, how do you see the angel? What did the angel's voice sound like when the words "Do not be afraid" were spoken? Meditate today, on that first Easter and how you experience the resurrection of Jesus today.

Tuesday, 4/18/17 Matthew 28: 8-10

The women left the tomb "with fear and great joy." What an interesting turnoff phrase. They haven't seen Jesus and they only know what the angel has said. Then with fear and great joy, they see Jesus! He also tells them to "not be afraid" to go and tell the disciples that he is going ahead of them. Have you ever felt fear and joy at the same time? Which emotion took precedence? Do you experience the risen Christ in such a way that you go tell others?

Wednesday, 4/19/17 Acts 10: 34—36

Peter preaches this message after he has had a vision of eating unclean food. God is leading him to reach out beyond who he thinks belongs among the believers. This was absolutely a game changer for the early church. Instead of Jesus being a savior for just the Jewish people, God shows "no partiality." New life, and new hope are a gift for everyone, everywhere. This is the message that the church is called to embrace. The resurrection of Jesus is the beginning of a whole new way of living and believing. In what ways does Peter's affirmation strengthen your faith to follow wherever the risen Christ leads?

Thursday, 4/20/17 Acts 10: 37-40

Peter, basically tells the story of Jesus in just a few verses. Jesus was baptized, he was blessed by the Holy Spirit with power and he healed and did good work. He was arrested, and crucified and resurrected. This is the basic theology of faith. In the Communion liturgy we say "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again." Everyone who experienced the resurrected Christ was changed. They in turn changed the lives of others. There was no going back. How do you think the church of the twenty first century can find that same level of power and wonder and faith?

Friday, 4/21/17 Matthew 28: 1-10

Each gospel records the resurrection of Jesus a little differently. In Wichita, we have experienced earthquakes in ways we had not before. Earthquakes are unsettling, a little scary and for the two Mary's rocked more than just their feet, it rocked their whole world. They looked for Jesus in the tomb, but he was not there. They became the first evangelists sharing the good news of God's love and grace through Jesus. Today, hear the words of the angel for you: **Do not be afraid! Go and tell others that Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!**