



SERMONS AT SAINT MARK'S

THE VERY REV. STEVEN L. THOMASON, DEAN AND RECTOR

EASTER DAY, APRIL 5, 2026

JEREMIAH 31:1-6; PSALM 118:1-2, 14-24; ACTS 10:34-43; MATTHEW 28:1-10

HOPE DAWNS IN A BRUTAL WORLD

Matthew 28:1-10 *[After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.' This is my message for you." So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."]*

Happy Easter, dear friends!

At its core, Easter is about propagating hope in the world, but how are we to proclaim hope in such a brutal world? These are tough times, right?! We are living in a time when hope is elusive, and fear and uncertainty dominate. How can we possibly proclaim hope today?

The question is perhaps as old as time, and every generation faces its own challenges.

I'm reminded that St. Julian of Norwich, writing in the 14th Century against the

backdrop of the Black Plague, which claimed her entire family and a third of Europe's population, wrote her famous words "All shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well."

I've seen Julian's words used recently for everything from theological exhortations to social media memes, but make no mistake, Julian was not offering some pollyannish wisp of optimism. She is not suggesting some whitewashing of reality. These words arose from a mystical vision in which she trusted that God was

passionately engaged with this world, however pell-mell it may be, and healing of the world is God's consummate design.

This is the essence of resurrection, which we proclaim today as a ritualized way of reenacting hope in a brutal world. Resurrection is not just about what happened in Palestine a long time ago; it is a joining of matter and spirit the way that God intended for creation all along. Resurrection was, is, and is to come. And we are invited into the experience here and now, in the fullness of being that is ours to celebrate, a gift from God.

This cathedral is full today, on this day, because we somehow intuitively know we need the hope of resurrection to find our way. We need the hope that God is stirring in our midst, even if we cannot yet fully apprehend what that means. We retell this ancient narrative of Jesus' resurrection, bringing it into our time and place, so that we can discover anew that hope dawns in a brutal world, and we as people of faith are called to reenact this hopeful narrative until it permeates our souls. When that happens, our social witness is one of infectious hope and solidarity with those who have been cast to the margins.¹

We can learn a great deal from our spiritual ancestors who were first-hand witnesses to the resurrected Christ. We know the end of the story; an empty tomb

is good news. But those first disciples did not know that. They were traumatized by the crucifixion of their beloved friend. They were understandably uncertain and afraid. It took time for them to regain their sea legs of courageous faith, but when they did, their witness changed the world, and we who sit here this morning have them to thank for it.

The early church did not say, "Look what the world is coming to!" They said, "Look what has come into the world."

They came to understand that God did not raise just anyone from the dead; God raised this man, this poor man, this crucified man, from the dead. He was killed by the imperial government in the most ignominious fashion, strung up and struck down because he stood in solidarity with the outcast and the poor, the stranger and those whose lives were valued least by the powers and principalities that oriented to bigotry, graft and a twitchy need for violence.

This crucified Christ becomes the embodiment of his own teaching—that no one is beyond the reach of God's loving embrace, nor should they be from ours. Resurrection is a divine act of solidarity with humanity, fostering hope that we can find a way into a new realm of justice and peace, and dignity for all people.

¹ Some of the thematic content here is inspired by an essay by B.G. White in *Christian Century*, April 2026, issue,

<https://www.christiancentury.org/features/mar-k-easter-begins-trembling>

I read an essay by a young woman recently that stopped me in my tracks. Stephanie Saldaña lives with her husband and children in Bethlehem, Palestine, one of the most oppressed places on earth today. She entitled her essay: *“Hope arrives in the present tense,”* and shares her revelation, received just a stone’s throw from the place where Jesus was born, that the use of the “liturgical present” helps us engender hope in our world today.²

At Christmas, we don’t sing carols that say

- *“For unto us a child was born;” we proclaim “for unto us a child is born...”*
- *We don’t say “Hark, the herald angels sang. No, the angels sing!*
- *And we sing with abandon: “Joy to the world; the Lord is come! Let Earth receive her King.”*

Present tense.

And if Christmas and Easter are your two primary occasions for making it to church, you choose well, because today we do the same.

- *Jesus Christ is risen today.*
- *Welcome, happy morning, age to age shall say;*

*Hell today is vanquished,
heaven is won today.*

We run the risk of stifling this gift when we lapse into the liturgical past tense—that God did this; Jesus did that, as if divine power is somehow constrained by time and that time is past. If we can’t trust that God is acting here and now, in this brutal world, inspiring us to hope and act for another way, then what’s the point?

Resurrection is not just about what happened in Palestine a long time ago; it is a joining of matter and spirit the way that God intended for creation all along. We must practice resurrection here and now.

Hope is a virtue that orients to a better future, but it is a gift that only comes to us in the present moment, the precise moment we have to reenact the hopeful narrative until it permeates our souls and then orient to the social witness which is ours to embrace as followers of Jesus.

Two weeks ago, the Cathedral vestry, our board of elected leaders, unanimously adopted what we call mutual ministry goals. These are overarching strategies that help focus us each year on our mission in this place and in the world. One orients to our affordable housing project here on campus; a second attends to our efforts to ensure this cathedral will stand as a beacon of hope for generations to come, and a place of gathering for the broader community in times of crisis, sorrow and

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<https://www.christiancentury.org/voices/hope-arrives-present-tense>

celebration.

The third stated goal is this:

*We redouble Saint Mark's Christian witness to the dignity of every human being through prayer, prophetic public voice, peaceful protest, educational programming, and concrete acts of solidarity with those who are targeted or marginalized.*³

This is not some pollyannish aspiration born of wispy optimism or ephemeral enthusiasm; it is the way we embody Jesus' teaching—that no one is beyond the reach of God's loving embrace, nor should they be from ours. It is a tangible way we join our bodies and souls, our matter and spirit, in the cause of resurrection hope, the sort that God intends for all creation.

Resurrection is a divine act of solidarity with humanity, fostering hope that we can find a way into a new realm of justice and peace, and dignity for all people.

May God give us the courage and strength to believe and embody this truth—that hope dawns in a brutal world. This is our liturgical present, friends. Practice resurrection, here and now. It is our liturgical present.

Alleluia. Christ is Risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia.



SAINT MARK'S
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³ <https://saintmarks.org/about/mutual-ministry-goals/>