

**Easter 2026**  
**Colossians 3:1-4, Matthew 28:1-10**  
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My children aren't little anymore, but nevertheless, on Friday afternoon, I was out buying candy for Easter baskets because even big kids like candy. And, let's just go ahead and be honest. Adults like Easter candy, too, which is why I picked out a few of my own favorites for myself. I particularly like Cadbury chocolate eggs, both the crème eggs and the solid milk chocolates, and Peeps, but not the regular ones. The Peeps that I like are the ones *dipped in chocolate*.

You can tell from my favorites that I like chocolate, but not everyone loves chocolate. Some of you might live for those black licorice flavored Brach's jellybeans. Some people do! You either love them or you hate them. I think we should do a quick Easter survey. Let's see a show of hands. Who is for licorice jellybeans? Now who's against?

I'm in the *for*-licorice jellybeans camp, but the ones I never liked were the clove flavored ones. When I was little, nothing could ruin Easter morning faster than biting into a clove flavored jellybean!

There are lots of different kinds and flavors of Easter candy, but it's all Easter candy, and this is like what we find when we read the different Gospel accounts of the resurrection of Jesus. If you compare the story as it's told in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, they don't all match up exactly in terms of specific details or in how they tell the story, but the core story is the same from Gospel to Gospel. On the third day, after Jesus had been crucified and buried, his disciples discovered that the tomb was empty because Jesus had risen. This morning we're going to hear the "Matthew-flavored"

account of the resurrection. Let's listen for God's word starting at 27:62. I'll be reading through Matthew 28:10.

**<sup>62</sup>The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate <sup>63</sup>and said, "Sir, we remember what that impostor said while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise again.' <sup>64</sup>Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise, his disciples may go and steal him away and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead,' and the last deception would be worse than the first." <sup>65</sup>Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers; go, make it as secure as you can." <sup>66</sup>So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone.**

**After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. <sup>4</sup>For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup>But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup>He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup>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." <sup>8</sup>So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup>Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers and sisters to go to Galilee; there they will see me."**

One of the things that accounts for the differences in the Gospel accounts, or “flavors,” if you will, is that each Gospel writer was writing with a personal point of view and for a particular audience which influenced how they told the story about Jesus. Matthew, for example, was writing to a largely Jewish audience, which is why he frequently quotes the prophets – to help his Jewish audience see how prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus. When it comes to the resurrection story, this is likely why he includes the part about the religious leaders’ concern about the disciples stealing Jesus’s body. The other Gospel writers don’t include this, but Matthew was writing to a community who may well have been told by their leaders that the resurrection story was nonsense and that Jesus’s disciples had stolen the body to make it seem like he had risen.

That’s exactly what the chief priests and the Pharisees were worried about when they went to Pilate. They weren’t worried about the possibility of a real miracle, but they were worried that the disciples might try to make it *look* like a miracle had occurred, so they asked Pilate to seal the tomb and place a guard to ensure that the body didn’t go anywhere.

This part of the story stands in stark contrast with what happens next. On Saturday, the religious leaders and Pilate were plotting and taking actions that make sense in a world where those with the most power get to control things and where dead people stay dead. When it came to Jesus, they were going to get the last word, but as Matthew continues to narrate the story, he makes it a point to show that while the chief priests and Pharisees were attempting to manage a dead body, *God* was about to intervene with supernatural power and raise that body to life. That’s what happened on Sunday.

Matthew includes the detail about the earthquake, and the angel descending, and unlike the angel in Mark who is simply

described as a young man dressed in white, Matthew's angel is unmistakably a non-human being whose appearance is glowing and dazzling. With these dramatic details, Matthew means to show clearly that something earth-shaking had taken place; something that transcended human expectations and limits; something that had changed everything.

When the women arrived at the tomb, the angel met them and announced this seemingly impossible thing. Jesus, who had been dead, was alive. They didn't know what to make of it. Matthew says they were filled with fear, but also joy, as they ran to tell the disciples, and while they were on their way, they saw him with their own eyes. Jesus was standing there in front of them. It wasn't a ghost or a hallucination. It was really Jesus, and they got down on their knees and worshipped him.

If the story ended with things as they were on Saturday and there'd been nothing more to tell, it would mean that really there are only two things we can count on in this world. The first is our own power and abilities. I can count on myself, and at first that might feel empowering. Think of all the things that we can do with our own human resources. Doctors and medicines can cure illnesses. Money can keep us comfortable. Nations with stronger weapons can overpower their enemies. Our powers can give us certain advantages and make us feel secure – like the Pharisees felt when they convinced Pilate to seal and guard the tomb. But despite our best efforts and abilities, they can't ultimately save us from death, and that is the second thing we can count on. In a Saturday world, we can use our power to make the best of things, but ultimately, death can't be avoided.

The story *didn't* end on Saturday, though. The *s-u-n* came up on Sunday, and so did the *S-o-n* and that means that our own powers

and death *aren't* the only two things we can count on anymore. It means that we can count on *God* who broke in and broke through natural and human limitations with otherworldly power that is far greater than we are and greater than death is. On Sunday, God raised Jesus from the dead and in that act, God declared that now God gets the last word and that word is *life*. The Saturday world and the Saturday rules have been overcome, and when Jesus came out of the tomb, he came out bringing the new Sunday reality with him. In this new reality, neither our failures, nor the powers of this world, nor death itself can finally undo or defeat us. Jesus gets the victory, and we get to *share* in that victory and live a brand new life.

This is the good news that is proclaimed to us on Easter Sunday, and it is the good news that we need to hear again and again, because it's so easy to get bogged down and discouraged by the reality that we see right in front of us. It's so easy to believe what seems to be true—that the story did end on Saturday and that there's no power stronger than the powers that were at work on Saturday. We see suffering – our own or that of others – and we can't end it. We see powerful people getting away with terrible things, and we can't stop them. Even in our own lives there are times when we feel crushed by our own limits- by habits we can't break or circumstances that we can't change.

When these are the things we see, it's easy to become discouraged or to lose hope, and this is why in Colossians, Paul urges the believers to keep their minds fixed on the reality that exists beyond the world of sight and touch. In Colossians 3:1-4 he says, **“... if you have been raised with Christ seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth, <sup>3</sup>for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in**

**God. <sup>4</sup>When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.”**

Paul is not saying here that we should live as if this world or our lives in this world don't matter. A colleague of mine used to warn that Christians shouldn't be so heavenly minded that they're no earthly good, but that isn't what Paul is saying here. He is simply urging us to remain mindful of and attentive to the invisible but very real presence and power of God that was on full display when God raised Jesus from the dead. Even when it looks like we're still living in a Saturday world where it seems like our own power and death are the only two things we can count on, the truth is that God has acted with power and we really are living in the reality of Sunday where death has been overcome.

So, what does it look like to set our minds on things above and to live as people who have truly been raised with Christ from death to life? It looks like refusing to live as if Saturday still has the final say. It looks like trusting Jesus enough to follow his way of forgiveness, humility, service, and love – even when it doesn't seem to pay off. It looks like living with hope, and acting like something better is already on the way.

This morning, the risen Christ is with us, and he is the one who invites us to come and eat with him at his table. There we remember that the story didn't end on Saturday. We are reminded that the new reality has already come through his death and resurrection, and at his table he gives us what we need to live as Easter people – to live not as if death has the final word, but as people who know that life does. So, come. Come and receive his mercy, his love, his life. Leave the Saturday world and taste the reality of Sunday. Amen.