

THIS APPEARS TO CHANGE THINGS

Order of Service (bulletin)

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Video (recorded live stream)

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April 5, 2026

Easter

John 20:1-18 (Living God's Way)

Mary of Magdala had been one of Jesus' friends. Mary didn't run away when the rulers killed Jesus. She and some of the other women disciples stayed near Jesus all the time that he hung on the cross. Mary wanted so much to help Jesus. But the soldiers wouldn't let her. Now Jesus was dead. Mary felt as if she had died too. Early on Sunday morning, on the third day after Jesus had been killed, Mary went to the place where they had put Jesus' dead body. But when she got there, she saw that Jesus' body was gone. Mary was very upset. She ran to call some of Jesus' other disciples. They came running as fast as they could. They too saw that Jesus' dead body wasn't there any more. Jesus' other friends didn't know what to do, so they went home. Mary stayed behind. She wanted to be by herself for a while. She wanted to have a good cry. Mary was very sad about all the things that had happened to Jesus. While she was crying, she looked into the place where they had put Jesus' body. She saw two angels. The angels asked her, "Why are you crying?" "They have taken Jesus away," said Mary. "And I don't know where they have put him." Then Mary turned around, and she saw somebody standing there. She was still crying, and the tears in her eyes made it hard for her to see who it was. "Who are you looking for?" this person asked. "And why are you crying?" Mary cried even harder. "If you have taken Jesus away, please tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him." "Mary," he said. As soon as she heard her name, she knew who it was. "Teacher!" she shouted. She was so happy. Jesus had been dead but now he was alive again. "Go and tell the other disciples," said Jesus. "Tell them that I am going to live with God." So Mary of Magdala went running just as fast as she could running and jumping and shouting because she was so happy. Jesus was alive again!

Acts 10:34-41 (Lectionary Story Bible)

"My friends," Peter said, "Something has happened to me that taught me an important new idea. I learned that God doesn't have any favorites. God loves everybody, not just the Jewish people, but everybody in the whole world." Then Peter told them the story of Jesus. He told them how Jesus taught people about God and about how to live God's way - how Jesus made sick people feel better. "Then something terrible happened," said Peter. "Or at least it seemed terrible at first. Some of the rulers thought Jesus was trying to get an army and fight them, so they killed him. But here's the best part of the story," said Peter. "We all thought Jesus was dead, but Mary of Magdala and the other women went to the place where Jesus' dead body was supposed to be, and it was gone! And then they all saw Jesus alive again, but in a new way! The other friends of Jesus also saw him. We *saw* him. Jesus is alive. Not alive in his body. Jesus is alive in our hearts!"



Rev. T. Blaine Gregg

When I first learned that my cohort was to be relocated from near Rome to Samaria. Yeah, I was not happy. It felt like a demotion to go all the way out into the empire. I didn't know anybody there. I didn't speak the local language. But you know what? Cesaria is not that bad of a place to wind up. It's right on the water, right on the sea, the Great Sea. The weather is beautiful. And I have got to tell you, the local people there are great. They're kind. They're welcoming. I mean, they're a little cautious around Roman soldiers, but they're pretty good people. I just started going to some of the feasts. I'd go to the concerts and it was just gorgeous. The music is just beautiful and the people are so kind. I even listened to the stories of the culture and I got to tell you, it's pretty interesting stuff. This God who rescued them from slavery and brought them to a land of milk and honey. And I sometimes feel guilty that it feels like we're doing the same thing to them again with this occupation. But I mean, Rome is supposed to be in charge.

It's pretty good being here. But then, I'll tell you, I had a dream one night. And in this dream, I got the sense that there was somebody I was supposed to go see. And in my dream, it said, "Go see this person named Peter." And in the dream, I knew that Peter was just down the coast in Jappa. And so I sent some people down the coast to look for Peter. And in my dream I had the sense that he was supposed to be at somebody's house named Simon: a tanner. I said just go and look for the local tanner and see if they know who this Peter is. And sure enough they brought Peter up to me.

Peter told me that he'd had a really strange dream too. He dreamed that he was so hungry and all these food animals came down from the sky and he looked closer and realized that none of them were animals that he was allowed to eat in his culture. But he was told it's okay. It's okay. God says this isn't unclean. God says this isn't profane. God says this is good. And if God says it's good, it's good. And so Peter came and visited me. And he realized that the love that he had for his God was not just for him and not just for even the people around him or the people that he grew up with or the people who had the same religious background as he did. Peter said, "My vision of all those unclean animals being told that they're clean tells me that the people outside of my circle, that I've always been told stay away from, well, they're loved by God just like I'm loved by God." And so Peter told us what was so important to him. He told us the story of a person named Jesus who was a healer, a teacher sent by God to represent God in this world. Peter said that the love that Jesus had and how Jesus suffered and died and yet God raised Jesus to life again was a reminder that God always provides.

And then Peter said the most profound thing I think I've ever heard. **God doesn't have favorites**. Peter knew that it wasn't just for himself and his people. And I said, "Well, am I one of God's people as well?" And Peter said, "Yes, you are." And everybody in my house committed ourselves to this same path that Peter saw. And it was wonderful because God doesn't play favorites. All of us are children of God in the same way as the first who knew the story and those who just heard it today. Thanks be to God. Amen.

****offering****



Rev. T. Blaine Gregg