



Easter

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

Churches around the world greet one another with these words every Easter morning. They communicate the joy that comes with celebrating Jesus' resurrection. Exclamation points may never be more appropriate.

The cause for joy was not obvious when the women found the empty tomb. There were questions, there was doubt, there was fear. Today, we explore the mystery and emotion of that first Easter.



Asbury
come. build. love.

Begin by praying for the group to expect God to move in unexpected ways.

Very early in the morning on the first day of the week, the women went to the tomb, bringing the fragrant spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they didn't find the body of the Lord Jesus. They didn't know what to make of this. Suddenly, two men were standing beside them in gleaming bright clothing. The women were frightened and bowed their faces toward the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He isn't here, but has been raised. Remember what he told you while he was still in Galilee, that the Human One must be handed over to sinners, be crucified, and on the third day rise again." Then they remembered his words. When they returned from the tomb, they reported all these things to the eleven and all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles. Their words struck the apostles as nonsense, and they didn't believe the women. But Peter ran to the tomb. When he bent over to look inside, he saw only the linen cloth. Then he returned home, wondering what had happened.

[Luke 24:1-12]

The People

- Luke tells us that a group of women went to take care of Jesus' body in the early morning of the day following the Sabbath. What do you think the women felt as they approached the tomb and their task? What might they have talked about?
- Each moment of the morning brought a new surprise. The women found the stone rolled away from the tomb, THEN they

went in, THEN they could not find Jesus' body, and THEN they saw two men in bright clothing. Using one word for each step, what four words would you use to describe the women's experience? How would you describe their emotional progression with a line graph?

- The other disciples did not believe what the women told them. Remembering that this was a tight-knit group, what do you think they found unbelievable in their story? Luke leaves out the women's response to the apostles' reaction. What do you think they felt? What do you think they did?
- Luke tells us that Peter ran to the tomb. What do you think motivated him to move? What do you think the other disciples did?

Us

- Recall a time when you felt confused and unsettled like the women who found Jesus' tomb empty. What happened? How did you respond to it? Did it eventually make sense? If so, how?
- We often encounter skepticism and doubt when it comes to faith and spirituality. How did you first respond to hearing about Jesus? If you had doubts, what helped address them? When have you seen someone else respond with doubt or skepticism when hearing about Jesus? How can we draw on the disciples' first experience when we respond to our own or other's skepticism and doubt?

- The women used their personal testimony of discovering the empty tomb and talking to two men wearing gleaming white clothing when they told the other disciples what had happened. How can personal testimony help others know God? How can your testimony help others know God?
- Peter ran to the tomb, saw it empty, and then left wondering what had happened. How can we seek out God's work in the world? How can we cultivate a sense of wonder as we witness God's work in the world?
- Jesus rising from the dead must have felt impossible, but God did what was impossible for anyone else. Where do you see physical and spiritual death in our world? Can God bring life from death in a world like ours?

Close by praying for the group's needs.