

CHRIST THE KING LUTHERAN CHURCH

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EASTER SUNDAY

April 5, 2026, 11:00 a.m.

Acts 10: 34-43; Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 5:6b-8 12:1-11; Saint John 20: 1-18

In nomine Jesu!

Alleluia! Christ is risen! **Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

Mary Magdalene was persistent. She had an unshakeable trust in God's Promise and an unquenchable love for her Jesus. She had every reason to be afraid, to remain out of sight and hopefully, out of mind, like the rest of Jesus' followers. In Christ's crucifixion, Mary had witnessed an unspeakable act of state-sponsored terror; she knew that she was in equal danger.

But Mary was persistent so "early on the first day of the week, *while it was still dark*, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb."

I confess that I'm haunted by this opening sentence of this Gospel because **it's still dark today**. Clouds of war again hang over us. Refugees flee to us; and we fear them. The stock market plummets, inflation, homelessness, hunger, persecution of those we now call "marginalized" persists; "social media" – which frankly is not social - our own consciences, our own children, and more all remind us that it's still dark and that, like so many of Jesus' disciples then, we have every reason to keep to ourselves and hide now; to keep those things that thrive in the darkness out of sight and out of mind. It's still dark today and, wherever we look, we see few glimmers of light.

Yet, like the Magdalene, we are persistent, unshakeable in our faith, unquenchable in our love. And so, early in the morning on *this* first day of the week, *while it is still dark*, we venture forth to test our faith; to seek our hope; to find the light.

Every day of the week, the darkness can be overwhelming. It was for Mary when she found the empty tomb. It is for us. Mary weeps. She is indignant; she snaps at the angels; she is distraught; she sees "evidence" of official foul play.

She can't even recognize her Jesus' face even when they are face to face. Often in this darkness, neither can we.

Until Jesus calls her — and us — by name. As in baptism God calls Poppy Jane and us by our own name; declaring God's loving embrace of us; speaking our *own* name as the risen Christ feeds us before sending us out to announce that our current darkness is being intersected by Christ's light.

The light of freedom. Not freedom on the cheap - a bumper sticker, a sales pitch, a partisan cheer. Not freedom for private indiscretions re-labeled inalienable rights. But freedom as God's gift, intimate, private, personal; and simultaneously communal, public, and global.

- Freedom from death, the final darkness, tricking us to believe we're completely on our own.
- Freedom from fear, death's shadow, clouding our relationships, shading our life and our nation's agenda; blinding us from seeing one another's hopes and one another's pain.
- Freedom from shame, that secret darkness, blotting out life's peace and joy with jealousy, hatred, and fear.
- Freedom from guilt, obscuring our future by obsessing over the gloom, or the glory, of the past.

Early in the morning on this first day of the week, there still is darkness; yet *while it is still dark*, Jesus comes seeking us! Speaking our name! Reminding us with his wounds, that the only death we have to fear is behind us; that our baptismal tomb is empty. That our God is the persistent one, insistently loving us all.

Early in the morning on this first day of the week, *while it is still dark*, Jesus not only finds us, but welcomes us to touch and taste God and life embodied for us in bread and wine.

And so, persistent ones, unshakeable in faith, unquenchable in love, *while it is still dark*, go with Mary and announce to all,

Alleluia! Christ is risen. **Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia.**

And see, and be, the change that Christ's Light brings.