**Easter Morning, 2020 6:30 am EDT**

**Calm in the Chaos Interfaith Center**

**Brockport, New York**

Music: CROWN HIM WITH MANY CROWNS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kPkjghup8E>

Until Jesus, people sacrificed animals to get closer to God

 **We know better**

We can be close to God

**Without sacrificing animals**

We can be close to God

 **When we join our hearts and voices in unison**

We can be close to God this Easter morning

 **We see new life around us, beside us and within us**

Easter is new life

 **Abounding with fresh greenery, buds bursting forth**

Easter is new life

 **This year, new ways of living, new ways to love one another**

Easter is resurrection

 **Because Jesus left the tomb**

Easter is resurrection

 **And because of that, we have hope**

We miss our fanfare, we miss our brass instruments

 **But there weren’t trumpets at the tomb**

We miss our Easter dinners with family

 **But there was no ham dinner the day Jesus arose**

We miss our Easter parades and bunnies and spring dresses

 **But the women at the tomb dressed no differently from the day before**

And later, the disciples and Mary saw Jesus

 **And we see him, too. Right here among us. Right now, today.**

And we feel his presence

 **Giving us his love and his peace that is so great**

Easter is God getting very close to us

 **Again and again. God is with us. God will not leave us**

We are Easter people.

**We are Easter people.**

Music: LOW IN THE GRAVE HE LAY

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65BrlcYNMeo>

Thoughts:

There are many people in the Easter story. Let’s begin with Joseph, a man who owned a large garden. In the garden was a cave-like tomb that no one had ever used. When Jesus’ body was removed from the cross, Joseph asked permission to take it and prepare it for burial. He wrapped the body in white linen cloths and laid it in the cave. He was doing his civic duty as a Jew. Preparing the body in the manner that he did was customary. Scriptures don’t tell us much more about this man, but that he offered a place to bury Jesus. ***An act of kindness****.*

Early in the morning after Sabbath (you remember they were Jews; Sabbath is yesterday), just after sunrise, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James went to the tomb. They found it empty. They were the first people to know that Jesus was not there. They were confused and they were frightened, *because things were not as they expected*. An angel was inside the tomb and reassured the two women by telling them to not be afraid. They ran away and eventually were two of the people to whom Jesus appeared after his death.

(There were hundreds of people, including the disciples, but that’s another story). Once the two women saw Jesus, Matthew 28:9 tells us that they held his feet and worshipped him.

But at first, they were afraid because ***things were not as they expected*.**

Later, Mary Magdalene was at the tomb and saw a man she thought was the gardener. She asked him if he knew where they had taken Jesus. When he called her by name, she recognized that it was Jesus, and she called out to him, “Rabboni,” which means teacher. Then she rose and reached out to him to embrace him and he said, no. She was not allowed to embrace him because he had not yet ascended to God. ***She was not allowed to hug him.***

Every year, when we hear the story of the crucifixion and resurrection, we might hear different things emerging from the story. It’s because WE are different each year, depending on the events that have happened for us in that year, and how our growing knowledge and wisdom have matured to let us hear the story in a new way each year.

So, I ask you this year, amid out sheltering-in-place, who are we in this metaphor of resurrection? Are we afraid because, like Mary and Mary Magdalene, things are not as we expected them to be?

Are we like Joseph, who offered his unused cave and personally wrapped the body in cloths, doing his duty as a Jew, an unsung hero, a person who gets little recognition for carrying on ‘business as usual.’

Or are we Mary Magdalene, who yearns to hug someone we cherish and have grown to love dearly?

No matter who resonates with you from this story, we must remember that the common thread is love. The two Marys went right to the tomb on what has become Easter morning because they loved Jesus. Joseph carried out the ritual of body preparation because he loved his faith community. Mary Magdalene was devoted to Jesus and loved him deeply. Love is why God appeared as a human, hoping we would see, through the life and death and resurrection of Jesus, that God’s love is enormous, is full of grace and is eternal.

1 Corinthians 6:14: "And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power." May the power of the great love of God raise you up, above your worries, above your suffering, and may the love of God in your heart be shared with all you meet today and every day. Amen.

Let us pray.

Gracious God, who is both mother and father to us, we come to you humbly in prayer, asking for your healing touch on each of our lives. We come today with concerns on our hearts, asking especially for your hand in the lives of (fill in your personal prayer requests).

We pray for comfort and peace for the families of the people who have died from this new virus; we ask your hand in healing those who are suffering in hospital and for those who are afraid.

We ask for your guidance in our daily decisions, to help us live the best lives we can live while on this beautiful planet.

We thank you for sending Jesus the messenger, who lived among us as a model of how to live in love. We thank you for our new awareness of what is important and what is not. Help us to realize your plan for us to be less judgmental, less greedy, and less competitive. Help us to move towards sharing, and working together as a community of loving people.

Please surround our loved ones with your light and protection, oh, God. Remind us that you are always present in our time of worry and concern.

We come to you as grateful people. Thank you for our friends who check on us; thank you for our family members who keep us smiling. Thank you for giving us strength to hold one another up in love.

With all that is holy, the people said, AMEN.

Music: JESUS CHRIST IS RISEN TODAY

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rMwPEmUMP7U>

May the peace of Jesus heart be your peace

May the grace of God be your comfort

May you remember that you are loved each and every day.

Amen.

“Happy Easter, everyone”