

## SERMON- Easter Sunday (A)

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Jeremiah 31:1-6

Acts 10:34-43

Matthew 28:1-10

St. Timothy's (Herndon)

April 5, 2026

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

### PRIVELEGE

First, a point of personal privilege this morning:

My father is here with us in church. He turns 84 years old today.

He was born April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1942, in Gordonsville, VA.

That day was also, you guessed it, Easter Sunday.

The next such intersection is going to be 2037. So Happy Birthday, Dad.

And Happy Easter, to you all.

### OPENING:

On that first Easter morning,

Mary and the other Mary went to see something stationary, something at rest  
to see the tomb, a stone, the body.

expecting to see something motionless, stuck,  
fixed in place and time

Instead they discovered something in motion, unfixd, unstuck.

Notice what the Mary's discovered:

They found an angel "impudently" sitting on a rock,  
mocking the notion that the story was over.<sup>1</sup>

That angel shows them the tomb, then points them in another direction.

There they find Jesus, who finally tells them to go in yet *another* direction.

They went to find something in place;

they found something, someone, on the move.

### EASTER DAY

Our Prayer Book states that Easter Day falls "on the Sunday after the full moon that occurs on or after the spring equinox on March 21." (page 880)<sup>2</sup>

Easter, thus, is a "movable Feast".... And so my father has had his birthday on Easter a half-dozen times in his life.

Easter "moves" (maddeningly for the calendar people) to land somewhere from March 22<sup>nd</sup> to April 25<sup>th</sup> every year.

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<sup>1</sup> This sermon owes a serious debt to William Willimon. "Pastoral Perspective." (Matthew 28.1-10) in *Feasting on the Gospels-Matthew Vol. 2*, edited by Cynthia Jarvia and E. Elizabeth Johnson. Presbyterian: 356, 358, 360.

<sup>2</sup> BCP 880.

So, to determine the date of Easter for a given year, you must find something called the “Golden Number”, then something called the “Sunday Letter” and a chart then guides you to that year’s Easter date.

I knew a priest who rejoiced in the process. Golden numbers and equinoxes—it was the closest, this priest said, that she would ever get to becoming a wizard in Harry Potter.<sup>3</sup>

It would be easier, though, just to “fix it”... to normalize Easter to a set date.

But the Church, in its wisdom has let it ‘move’, perhaps because, otherwise, people, deep down inside, want to somehow contain it,

to put boundaries,

to institutionalize,

to routinize this holiday,

    this day called Easter,

        this thing called Resurrection.

Because we really want to do that to God, to store up and bottle our Creator, who is all-merciful and all-loving, but also somewhat unpredictable, so we can use it to our own whims.

But Easter defies such a definition by its very essence.

The women went to see something fixed, and they got something on the move:

Surprise

“He is not here.”

Surprise

“Do not be afraid.”

Surprise

“Go to Galilee”

With that, God is saying:

“I will never stop renewing, rebuilding, reconstructing, resurrecting.

I will always be on the move, coming into your hearts, entering into your lives, showing up when you thought things were as dead as a doorknob.

Meeting you on the Damascus Road and the Emmaus Road and on Spring St and Van Buren ‘Roads’.”

So the Church can get it wrong, sometimes, by suggesting that all this happens by the power of the its own religious momentum, by the observance of our Lenten practices, by the sheer (genuinely) beauty and majesty of this Easter morning celebration... that we somehow are responsible for all of this.

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<sup>3</sup> This is from either Sarah Condon or Barbara Brown Taylor, but I have been unable to find the reference.

Frustratingly, God replies: “you thought you had me.” You had me dead to rights...  
But in the words of the great Shaker hymn:  
*They buried my body and they thought I'd gone,  
But I am the Dance, and I still go on.  
They cut me down and I leapt up high;  
I am the life that'll never, never die;*

So, in 2027, Easter will be on a different date from this year, not even the same month, March 28<sup>th</sup>!

And we will continue this journey and God will continue this Dance.

### **CALENDAR:**

Back to the calendar,

I remember, a few years back, in the build-up to the Easter holiday, the Candy industry people got together and let it be known that, in their wisdom, it would be better for them (supply chain, logistics, stocking, store promotions) if we indeed fixed the date for Easter.

The school calendar people, the airline and hotel industries, nodded vigorously to this suggestion and it was taken to... who else... the Pope in Rome, who is in charge, I suppose, of such things, and who, to his credit, said NO.

The Pope, it turns out, was interested in only one change to the Easter date, and it was not to make it easier for the maker of *Peeps*, it was to joining the date to that of our Christian brothers and sisters in the Orthodox faith.

Here is your religious factoid for this morning: Eastern Orthodox Christians are the 300 or so million people across the world who have observed Easter, for hundreds of years, on a different date based on the Julian calendar whereas we in the Western Church do it based on the Gregorian.

### **BIRTHDAYS:**

My father, remember him? He's still with us.

He converted a few decades back to, you guessed it, Orthodoxy.

Born Baptist, Converted to Episcopalianism.

Then to Russian Orthodoxy.

Talk about a Movable Feast.

Talk about God being on the move!

Do not be afraid.

Come peer into the tomb, only God knows what you will find in there.

Another one: I had a boss, old job, who was born on Easter Day to agnostic parents in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. And, because it was Easter, and they liked the name, they named her “Christine” ... and she grew up to be... you guessed it... an Episcopal priest, much to her parent’s bemusement.

## **CONCLUSION**

God entered into her life and my father’s and yours and mine.

God does that, not only on Easter Day, but everywhere and in all times.

Even to the closed tomb, with a body dead and disfigured, in world that seems to have lost all hope.

God does that in a million ways. I am partial to a particular way, this imperfect vehicle called the Church. But there are others.

Jesus said: “Cleave a piece of wood; I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there.” That’s in the deleted scenes of the Bible. The Gospel of Thomas, did not quite make it into the Bible.

Surprise.

So, “Come and see

Do not be afraid”

*Dance, then, wherever you may be,*

*I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,*

*And I’ll lead you all, wherever you may be,*

*And I’ll lead you all in the Dance, said he.*

**AMEN**