

Community Church of Issaquah  
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## The Joy of Easter

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He is risen. He is risen indeed.

Today, we stand at the center of the Christian story—the moment everything changed. Easter is not just a day on the calendar. It is not merely a tradition, a gathering, or a symbol of spring. Easter is a declaration. A bold, world-shaking, history-altering declaration: life has overcome death, hope has triumphed over despair, and love has had the final word.

Let us go back to that first Easter morning.

Before the sunrise, before the joy, before the celebration—there was grief. There was confusion. There was fear. The followers of Jesus had watched Him die. They had seen the nails driven into His hands, heard His final cry, and witnessed the stone rolling across the tomb. For them, it seemed like the end. Every hope they had placed in Him appeared buried. Every promise felt broken.

And so, early on the first day of the week, some women made their way to the tomb. Not with expectation—but with sorrow. Not with hope—but with heaviness. They carried spices, prepared not for a miracle, but for mourning. And yet, when they arrived, something was different. The stone had been rolled away.

This is where Easter begins—not with understanding, not with clarity, but with a surprise. A disruption. A question: “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” The stone was rolled away—not so Jesus could get out, but so we could see in. Because what they discovered that morning is what we celebrate today: the tomb was empty. And that changes everything.

What’s striking about the Easter story is not just that Jesus rose—but who He appeared to first. He didn’t go to kings or rulers. He didn’t present Himself first to the powerful or the influential. He came to those who were grieving, those who felt lost, those who thought it all was over. He met people in their brokenness. That is good news for us today.

Because many of us don’t come to Easter with everything figured out. Some of us arrive carrying quiet burdens. Some come with doubts, with questions, with pain that hasn’t yet healed. Some are walking through seasons of loss, uncertainty, or fear. And Easter says: that’s exactly where resurrection begins. God does not wait for us to have perfect faith before He shows up. He meets us in the middle of our confusion. He meets us in our grief. He meets us at the tombs we stand before—the places where we thought hope had died. The resurrection is not just a past event; it is a present reality. It is God stepping into our darkest moments and saying, “This is not the end.”

Think about that stone. It was heavy. Immovable. Final. In the minds of Jesus’ followers, that stone represented everything that stood between them and hope. It sealed

their loss. It confirmed their fear. It declared that death had won. But when they arrived, the stone was already moved. And here's the powerful truth: the stone that humans placed could not withstand the power of God.

What are the stones in your life? Maybe it's fear that keeps you from moving forward. Maybe it's guilt from the past that you can't seem to shake. Maybe it's a broken relationship, a lost opportunity, or a situation that feels impossible to change. We all face stones—things that seem too heavy to move, too final to overcome. Easter reminds us that God specializes in rolling stones away. Not always in the way we expect. Not always on our timeline. But always with a purpose greater than we can see. The resurrection tells us that no obstacle is too great, no situation too far gone, no life too broken for God to redeem. The stone is rolled away.

The empty tomb is not just evidence—it is an invitation. It invites us to believe that death is not the end. It invites us to trust that God is still at work. It invites us to step into a new kind of life. When the women saw the empty tomb, they were afraid—but also filled with awe. They didn't fully understand what had happened, but they knew something extraordinary had taken place. And then they were given a message: "He is not here; He has risen." That message was not meant to stay at the tomb. It was meant to be shared. Easter is not something we simply observe, it is something we carry. It calls us to live differently. Seeing the world differently. To approach life not from a place of defeat, but from a place of victory. Because if the resurrection is true, then it means that hope is always stronger than despair.

The resurrection doesn't just change what happens after we die—it changes how we live now. It transforms our story. Before Easter, the story looked like defeat. After Easter, it became a story of victory. Before Easter, fear ruled. After Easter, courage rose. Before Easter, death had the final word. After Easter, life spoke louder. And the same is true for us. The resurrection means your story is not finished. No matter where you are, no matter what you've been through, God is still writing.

That failure you thought defined you. It's not the end. That pain you've been carrying. It's not the final chapter. That dream that feels lost. It's not beyond restoration. Easter declares that God brings new life out of what seems dead. He doesn't just make things better—He makes them new.

At its core, Easter is about hope. Not wishful thinking. Not optimism based on circumstances. But a deep, unshakable hope rooted in the reality that Jesus is alive. Hope that says: even when I don't see it, God is working. Hope that says: even when life is hard, God is good. Hope that says: even when things feel final, God has the last word. The resurrection gives us hope that cannot be taken away—because it is not based on what happens to us, but on what has already happened. The tomb is empty. And because of that, hope is alive.

Easter is not just about what God has done—it's about how we respond. We are called to live as resurrection people. What does that mean? It means we carry hope into hopeless places. It means we choose love even when it's difficult. It means we extend grace, knowing how much grace we've received. It means we refuse to let fear define us, because we know that death itself has been defeated. It means we live with purpose, with courage, with faith. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in us—bringing transformation, renewal, and life. We are not called to go back to who we were before. We are called to step into who God is making us to be.

The Easter story didn't end at the tomb. It continued as Jesus appeared to His disciples, as fear turned into boldness, as ordinary people became messengers of extraordinary hope. And today, that story continues through us. Every act of kindness, every moment of forgiveness, every step of faith, it all reflects the reality of the resurrection. We become living testimonies that the stone has been rolled away. That life is stronger than death. That love wins.

On that first Easter morning, the message was simple: "Come and see." Come and see the empty tomb. Come and see that Jesus is alive. And then, "Go and tell." Go and share the good news. Go and live differently. Go and carry hope into the world. That invitation still stands today. Come and see what God has done. Come and experience the power of resurrection in your own life. And then go—go

into your homes, your communities—and live as people who know that the tomb is empty. Because when the stone is rolled away, everything changes. Fear gives way to faith. Despair gives way to hope. Death gives way to life.

He is risen.

He is risen indeed.