

**Easter Sunday ~ Sunday, April 5, 2026**  
**“The Heart God Desires: A Joyful Heart”**  
**1 Peter 1:3-9 & John 20:1-18**

On Good Friday, we stood at the foot of the cross and saw the \_\_\_\_\_ heart of Christ—a heart willing to suffer, bleed, and die for the sake of sinners like us.

He desires—and He gives us—a \_\_\_\_\_ heart. Not a shallow or fleeting happiness that depends on our \_\_\_\_\_ circumstances, not a forced smile that ignores the \_\_\_\_\_ of pain and suffering, but a deep and abiding joy rooted in the victory of Jesus Christ over sin and death.

The resurrection \_\_\_\_\_ everything.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” (1 Peter 1:3-4)

Not a fragile hope, not a fading hope, but a \_\_\_\_\_ hope—because it’s anchored in a living \_\_\_\_\_.

Christian joy isn’t simply \_\_\_\_\_ or wishful thinking, it isn’t a pie in the sky, unicorns and rainbows approach to life. It’s resurrection \_\_\_\_\_.

“We are an Easter people, and Alleluia is our song.” (Augustine)

This isn’t just poetic language; it’s theological \_\_\_\_\_. We’re people who live on the far side of the empty tomb. We’re people whose \_\_\_\_\_ has survived the grave. We’re people whose joy is rooted not in what we feel or in the circumstances of our life, but in what God has \_\_\_\_\_.

And that’s where the resurrection story begins—in the midst of \_\_\_\_\_.

This tells us something essential about Christian joy: Joy doesn’t deny sorrow, it \_\_\_\_\_ it. The resurrection doesn’t erase pain and suffering from our lives, it robs it from having the \_\_\_\_\_ word.

“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.” (Psalm 30:5)  
Easter morning is the \_\_\_\_\_ of that promise.

**3 TRUTHS ABOUT A JOYFUL HEART**

**Truth #1: A joyful heart \_\_\_\_\_.**

“...early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark.” (John 20:1)

It was still dark—not just in the sky, but in Mary’s \_\_\_\_\_.

You can almost hear the \_\_\_\_\_ in her words. She doesn’t yet understand the resurrection, and so she assumes the worst. To her, this isn’t a miracle, it’s one more loss, one more \_\_\_\_\_.

Stooping to look into the tomb, she sees the angels inside, but she’s so overcome with \_\_\_\_\_ that she can’t fully grasp what’s happening. She’s standing at the very edge of \_\_\_\_\_, and yet, she doesn’t know it.

This is where the joyful heart begins. Not in \_\_\_\_\_ or in celebration, but in \_\_\_\_\_.

Mary was grieving, confused, and heartbroken. And yet, unknown to her, God was already at \_\_\_\_\_. That is often how the Lord moves: quietly, faithfully, patiently, behind the scenes of our \_\_\_\_\_ and sorrow.

Mary’s grief was real, but her sorrow wasn’t the \_\_\_\_\_ word in her story. And the same is true for us.

There are seasons when we feel as though we’re standing in the dark—waiting, wondering, grieving, and praying for \_\_\_\_\_ that hasn’t yet come. Mary stood in that darkness. She didn’t yet see the sunrise, but it was already on its way. God’s greatest work often begins in our \_\_\_\_\_ moments.

Mary didn’t hide her tears. She didn’t force a smile. She wept, and Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ her there.

“For I consider the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” (Romans 8:18)

This verse isn’t \_\_\_\_\_ suffering, but placing it in the larger story of \_\_\_\_\_. The cross was real, the tomb was real, but the resurrection was real too. And because Christ is risen, \_\_\_\_\_ no longer has the final word.

That’s the beginning of a joyful heart—not pretending life is easy, but \_\_\_\_\_ that God is at work even when we can’t see how.

**Truth #2: A joyful heart \_\_\_\_\_.**

“She turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus.” (John 20:24)

Her grief \_\_\_\_\_ her vision and her expectations blind her to what God is actually doing.

You can almost feel the \_\_\_\_\_ in her voice. She's still trying to make sense of the loss, still trying to hold on to something familiar, still searching for a body when \_\_\_\_\_ itself is standing before her.

The turning point of Easter isn't just the empty tomb, it's an \_\_\_\_\_ with the risen Jesus. The empty tomb is evidence, but the living Christ is \_\_\_\_\_. And that's where joy is born—not in theory, not in \_\_\_\_\_ belief, but in encountering the living Lord.

The risen Jesus doesn't deal with us as a crowd—He deals with us as \_\_\_\_\_. He knows our individual names, stories, and wounds. Mary isn't just one among many, she's \_\_\_\_\_, called, and recognized. And when she recognizes Him, joy bursts into her heart.

“Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.” (1 Peter 1:8-9)

Because the risen Christ isn't confined to the pages of history—He's \_\_\_\_\_ with His people by the \_\_\_\_\_.

“...that I may know Christ and the power of his resurrection.” (Philippians 3:10)

Christian joy is \_\_\_\_\_. It's born not from knowing facts about Jesus, but from knowing Jesus Himself. That's why Easter isn't just a day to remember something that happened long ago—it's an invitation to \_\_\_\_\_. Someone who is alive today.

Mary's joy didn't begin when she saw the empty tomb. It began when she \_\_\_\_\_ the risen Jesus standing before her.

A joyful heart is born when we come to \_\_\_\_\_—not just believe in theory, but truly know—that Jesus is alive and \_\_\_\_\_.

He speaks our \_\_\_\_\_ through His Word, His Spirit, or through the quiet work of grace in our lives, and joy begins to take root—not because life suddenly becomes easy, but because we realize that we're not \_\_\_\_\_.

That's the birthplace of a joyful heart—not wishful thinking, not forced optimism, but the settled \_\_\_\_\_ that Jesus is alive, and He knows us personally.

**Truth #3: A joyful heart \_\_\_\_\_.**

“Do not cling to me...but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord.’” (John 20:17-18)

These words mark the first \_\_\_\_\_ of the resurrection.

That's the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Christian life: Joy received becomes joy shared. Grace experienced becomes grace proclaimed. Resurrection witnessed becomes resurrection announced.

“...rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.” (1 Peter 1:8)

Because when you truly believe that death has been \_\_\_\_\_, you can't live as though nothing has \_\_\_\_\_.

She doesn't deliver a theological \_\_\_\_\_, nor does she explain every detail. She simply declares what she knows to be \_\_\_\_\_: “I have seen the Lord.”

And sometimes that's the most powerful witness of all—not complicated arguments, but simple \_\_\_\_\_. Not polished speeches, but honest words. This kind of witness carries weight because it's not loud arrogance or forced evangelism, but steady, \_\_\_\_\_ witness flowing from \_\_\_\_\_ encounter.

Here's where this truth comes home to us because not all witness happens from pulpits or platforms, but rather in the \_\_\_\_\_ places of everyday life.

A joyful heart becomes visible in the way we \_\_\_\_\_.

Because if Christ is truly risen, then our lives should bear witness to that reality—not with forced smiles or artificial cheerfulness, but with steady, \_\_\_\_\_ joy. The kind of joy that doesn't \_\_\_\_\_ when life becomes hard.

We don't need to have every answer. We don't need \_\_\_\_\_ words. We don't need flawless faith. We simply need to bear witness to the risen Christ—to the ways He's met us, \_\_\_\_\_ us, sustained us, and given us \_\_\_\_\_.

†

The resurrection of Jesus isn't simply the happy ending to a sad story, it's the \_\_\_\_\_ of human history. It means sin has been paid for, death has been conquered, and the grave has lost its claim.

**“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”**  
(1 Cor. 15:55)