**“He Is Risen!”** Rev. Dr. Scott M. Kenefake
Easter Sunday The House of Hope Presbyterian Church
Isaiah 65:17-25; Luke 24:1-12 Saint Paul, Minnesota
April 20, 2025

Easter Egg Crisis! Did you know that because of the high price of eggs (currently $6.23 a dozen), some people are looking for alternatives for dyeing. And according to numerous news articles this past week, the most popular alternative to dyeing eggs … is (wait for it) *dyeing potatoes!* Really?

The headline I liked the best was from the Atlantic:

*One Simple Hack to Ruin Your Easter: The price of eggs has some online creators suggesting that potatoes are a suitable alternative. Please believe me, they are wrong, by Kaitlyn Tiffany.*

She decided to try dyeing the potatoes herself. This is what she learned. She said:

*I bought … a bag of Yukon Gold potatoes that were light-colored enough to dye and small enough to display in a carton and expensed those to The Atlantic too. Then I looked online for advice on how to proceed; mostly, I wanted to know whether I should cook the potatoes before or after dyeing them. A popular homemaking blog called The Kitchn gave*[*detailed instructions*](https://www.thekitchn.com/how-to-dye-easter-potatoes-23719073)*on how to dye Easter potatoes and ‘save some cash while flexing your creativity for the Easter Bunny this year’ … I did find out that I should decorate the potatoes and then cook them.*

*Alone in my kitchen on a Saturday morning, I dyed … six raw potatoes and used a teensy paintbrush to add squiggly lines, daisies, and other doodles, returning me to my youth as an observant Methodist who really knew her resurrection-specific hymns … The potatoes came out sort of yellow, or sort of pink, or sort of purple, all of which you may recognize as colors that potatoes already have when you buy them at the store. I hated them.*

*When I painted HAPPY EASTER on one of the potatoes, it looked like a threat. When I baked them in my oven, their skins (naturally) crinkled and came somewhat unstuck from their insides. This had the effect of making them look shriveled and even more sinister. When I put them in the egg carton, … I thought: Only a person who was lying would do this and say it was good. Without being too overwrought about it, the whole project felt like a symbol not of renewal but of the wan stupidity of our cultural moment.*

As another commentator put it: *Springtime without eggs is a season robbed of magic. It’s a sign that something is rotten in the state of the United States.* *Where, precisely, have we gone wrong? It’s hard to know whether we have failed God or man or nature — maybe all three.*

I share this with you because the dyed egg is *an Easter symbol,* but Christianity overlayed its own meaning onto our preexisting seasonal relationship with our avian friends. We associate eggs with springtime because birds lay them in response to springtime changes in light. Wily humans concocted ways to preserve this seasonal surplus — hard-boiling, pickling, soaking in quicklime or perhaps dipping them in a coating of wax to seal them off from air … *That eggs seem magical helped.* Heavy, inert, and smooth as a water-tumbled stone, a mother bird’s single-minded devotion — sitting on this seemingly lifeless object for days or weeks — eventually pays off: A tiny beak emerges, and life perseveres.

The medieval Catholic Church treated eggs *as a temptation* and declared a springtime fast during Lent. The faithful had to *stay* their eggy appetites until the Sunday following the first full moon after the spring equinox: *Easter.* Hungry medieval devotees missed them so much that they concocted vegan versions out of almond milk, with saffron-golden *“yolks.”* On the morning of the resurrection, people broke their fast with frenzied consumption, turning the stone-like egg into the stone of Jesus’ tomb, cracked open for spiritual nourishment.

Let’s think about these things in terms of our text from Luke 24 this morning.

There exist, you see, myriad reasons to be skeptical or argumentative on Easter morning. Before you even raise issues of miracles and modern science, the New Testament itself is full of conflicting accounts regarding the resurrection. *The four gospels don’t actually agree on what happened following Jesus’ execution.* The details vary — as do some pretty significant parts of the story. Early Christian communities didn’t share a common understanding of the resurrection, even Paul and the author of Luke seemed to quarrel about it.

The point is that *argument* about the resurrection is a robust — and ancient — tradition.

But, given that, all four gospels do share one startling claim:

***Women were the first to witness the resurrection and no one believed them.***

That’s the beginning of Christianity. Jesus appeared to the women and the men were skeptical.

You know, on Easter, Christians usually read *only one* gospel account. *This is the Luke year.* Luke is a big-time Peter fan, giving him some of the best lines and most important stories in the book. Easter Sunday is no exception. In today’s reading, all of the other apostles dismiss the women’s story as an *“idle tale.”* Peter, always Luke’s hero, doesn’t believe them either. But he wants to check it out for himself.

And what happens when he does? *The women were telling the truth*. Peter was amazed.

The other three gospels also give the tomb revelation to the women. The details vary, but the overall point is the same. And one female character *— Mary Magdalene* — shows up in every case.

Here are some excerpts from the others for you to compare:

**MARK**

**When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome** bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb….And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed.

And he said to them, *“Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him.**But go, tell his disciples, and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.”*

[Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, … She went and told those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept.But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, *they would not believe it.*]

**MATTHEW**

**Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.**And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, approached, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it…

The angel said to the women, *“Do not be afraid! I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ Behold, I have told you.”*

Then they went away quickly from the tomb, fearful yet overjoyed, and ran to *announcethis* to his disciples.

**JOHN**

**Mary Magdalene turned around and saw Jesus standing,** but she did not know that it was Jesus.Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?”

Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic,“Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).

Jesus said to her, *“Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; 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”—and that he had said these things to her.

Commenting on this, Church Historian, Diana Butler Bass, said:

These beautiful stories — of a miracle and triumph — also carry *pain.* To have seen but not believed. To witness and have the testimony dismissed. To have been first but relegated to the last. These stories, for all the *Easter alleluias* they have sounded over two millennia, also reveal a great injustice — the church’s original and originating sin — *not believing the women.*

*So, what’s the upshot on this Easter morning?* As told by the gospels, the resurrection has only a few common elements — *a disturbed tomb, Mary Magdalene, Jesus, and a directive to tell the men.* This is what we know of the story. *That’s all we know.* And we only know it because of the women.

Wherever you are, in skepticism or joy or anger or assurance, I invite you into the simplicity of the story, its most basic elements. *Those four things.* Open tomb and burial cloth disturbed; Jesus gone — or in dazzling glory; Mary Magdalene with, perhaps, her friends; and a commission to the women to preach and proclaim what they have witnessed.

Imagine if men had believed women from that day. Imagine if (that which became) a great faith and a global church had listened. Imagine how different it could have been. *Imagine.*

Which brings us back to Luke 24—and the preaching, the testimony of the women.

*“Preaching happens wherever people are hungry for freedom, and someone is given a Word of freedom to preach,”* writes Anna Carter Florence in [*Preaching as Testimony*.](https://bookshop.org/a/71092/9780664223908)

In Luke’s account of Jesus’s resurrection, the women are given a Word of *freedom* to preach.

The centering of these women is not only unique but liberating; *they are empowered to share the Good News.*

You see, Luke’s Gospel frequently highlights the poor and marginalized, *and here he has given them the microphone.* It’s as if he thinks those hungry for freedom – *like women oppressed by patriarchy* – are best equipped to proclaim the good news of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection.

*“Why do you look for the living among the dead?”* the angels ask these perplexed women. *“He is not here but has risen.”* The tomb does not contain Jesus, his life, or his ministry. Death does not hold God captive, nor God’s son, nor God’s disciples. In Christ’s resurrection, God reveals that there is no chain God can’t break, no prisoner God can’t liberate. God’s love sets us free in Christ.

Friends, however we celebrate, (whether with eggs or potatoes), we do so against the backdrop of a world that continues to *oppress, imprison and marginalize.* However we celebrate, we should prioritize *listening* to those hungry for freedom — *so we can hear what Christ has freed us for.* We should revel in our new life in Christ, and pray for those separated from God’s abundance, that they might also be freed.

Freed from *death* for abundant life.

Freed from *hate* for love.

Freed from *violence* for peace.

Freed from *all that oppresses and imprisons* for our collective liberation.

Let us pray--