

# THE FIRST 15

Monday, April 1, 2024

Today is Easter Monday, April 1 and we are exploring what the Bible says about the Risen Christ.

## OPENING PRAYER

*Holy and blessed Lord, I long for you to speak into my life and circumstances. As I begin this time of prayer, I still my body, quiet my mind and slow my breathing. I inhale the joy and peace of your loving presence. I exhale the worries and concerns I have carried with me. Give me ears to hear, eyes to see and a heart to understand the good message you have for me today as I study your Holy Word. Amen.*

## SCRIPTURE

***When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here." Mark 16:1-6a***

## REFLECTION

This week we will revisit the story of the Risen Christ from the perspective of each Gospel writer. Today we read from the Gospel of Mark. Jesus breathed his last breath on the cross at Golgotha and the enormous curtain of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Jewish Council, went to the Roman governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate, and asked to take possession of Jesus' dead body. Those who were condemned and crucified were normally given dishonorable burials in a mass grave assigned to the worst criminals. Joseph insisted on providing Jesus an honorable burial. Pontius Pilate agreed. Joseph took Jesus' lifeless body down from the cross, gently wrapped it in a new linen cloth and placed it in a tomb carved out of rock. He had a large stone rolled against the entrance of the tomb to seal it.

Today I listen for what God might be saying to me through the words of ancient scripture about the empty tomb of Jesus. I join the three women and walk quietly alongside them in the gentle rays of the early morning light. The scent of the morning dew combines with the pungent odor of the herbs and spices we carry for embalming purposes. We come looking for the crucified Jesus in an ancient tomb carved out of rock and sealed with an enormous stone. There are emotions of grief, sadness and bewilderment over his violent death. We share concern over the access to his dead body and the need for someone to roll away the stone.

To our surprise we find the tomb is already open. The stone has been rolled away. We are startled by an angel sitting inside of the tomb. He speaks to us and says Jesus is no longer there. What am I to make of this news? How does this encounter inform my life today? I consider the images of the spices, the stone, the tomb, the angel, and the women. I contemplate where I might find myself in this story. Perhaps something has died in my life - a dream, a promise, a hope, a joy, a relationship. Maybe I have been searching for something that is no longer there. Perhaps something is preventing me from accessing the new life and joy God wants for me through Jesus.

**Ask:** What are the questions and concerns on my mind today? What might the heavy stone or the sealed tomb represent in my current circumstances?

**Pause and Pray**

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

*Blessed Lord Jesus, I am looking for you this morning as a new day dawns. There are obstacles and challenges that threaten to prevent me from experiencing the abiding joy of your presence. Who will roll away the stone for me today? Who will remove the barriers that keep me from your love? I long to be utterly free to worship you as my Risen Lord! I invite you into the deepest recesses of my soul and ask you to reveal the stones I have erected and the dead tombs I have forgotten. Show me what needs to be opened and exposed to your power and grace. Uncover the darkened corners of my heart and shine the light of new life into my lonesome spirit. Amen.*