

## **Easter Sunday, 2026**

East Ontario, St. Mary's and Holy Trinity

April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026

(Matthew 28:1-10)

*Risen Jesus, in your divinity you are everywhere, and in your humanity, you are within us. Make known your saving help and give us the feeling of your blessed assurance and abiding love.*

On Good Friday, I spoke about how Jesus saves and redeems the faithful from all kinds of despair. That by the literal place of his cross, he, as God and man, places himself in each and every spiritual place of despair, so that, by his resurrection, he can burst a hole in the thick cage of our hopelessness and lift us out with him, to lift us out with him in the spiritual effect of his bodily resurrection.

I repeat from Friday. To our places of injustice and trauma, Jesus goes to lift us out. To our places of guilt and shame, Jesus goes to lift us out. To our places of wishing to die, Jesus goes to lift us out. To our places of disaster and misfortune, Jesus goes to lift us out. His literal cross on that hill outside Jerusalem, is made by his Spirit the spiritual place in the depths of our being where all hope is lost. God, in Jesus, at the cross, goes to the place of Godless despair.

To know Jesus as Saviour is to have an ongoing experience of healing or freedom or reconciliation or forgiveness or new hope that *he* makes possible, that

*he* makes possible, not just by giving us teaching the same way Socrates or Sidhartha gave us good words to live by. No, the ongoing experience of healing or freedom or reconciliation or forgiveness or new hope that Jesus makes possible, *he accomplishes*, day by day, as a living agent, a hidden but active person, with divine love and divine power, as Saviour, as Redeemer, as Healer, as Friend, as God-with-us.

Jesus is remembered and known today because when his Holy Spirit raised him from the dead, the living, crucified Jesus became a power to give life where there is death, hope where there is despair, love where there is hate, strength where there is weakness, courage where there is fear, virtue where there is vice, and fullness where there is emptiness.

And for questioners like myself, we ought always to note: that the truth of Jesus being resurrected has always been doubted—even by those who experience redemption through him. Further in the passage from Matthew than we read today, we get this mind-bending line: “When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted” (28:17). In the case of the risen Jesus, who some disciples saw face to face, even seeing is not believing. Many with the Christian experience have an encounter with Jesus *before believing*, and from that point on their belief is just trying to keep up with whatever is happening to them.

The truth of the risen Jesus is a decidedly strange truth. Matthew tries to communicate this by telling the story of the women at the empty tomb with a little embellishment, or, if not embellishment, then at least some details the other gospel writers to leave out. Matthew wants us to view the risen Jesus as a brief inbreaking of heaven from beyond our world. The risen Jesus has the kind of body we will have in heaven. And so Matthew narrates the empty tomb scene like a little apocalypse is happening. A sudden earth-quake! An angel appearing and descending from the sky! Cosmic power shining and flashing like lightning! Guards stuck numb with fear! It's like a mini version of how the Bible depicts the end of the world and the beginning of a new heaven and a new earth—a creation saved for eternity from evil, sin, death and sorrow. One of my favourite sentences in recent theology, from a Lutheran, Robert Jensen: “It seems clear that what Peter and the Twelve and Paul saw...was Jesus as *an inhabitant of the age to come...*” (ST, vol 1. 197). Just like those disciples who looked the risen Jesus in the face and still doubted, our eyes of this world cannot see plainly and with certainty the Jesus whose resurrection is an event from another world, the world of God's eternity, a new heaven and new earth, appearing in advance.

And the whole reason he appears in advance is to bring hope for those who suffer in this world, to lift us from the place of despair into which Jesus entered at his cross. What we need to believe in the resurrection of Jesus is not certainty

about a historical event. What we need to believe in the resurrection of Jesus is the feeling of blessed assurance and abiding love. To feel assured is that feeling that no matter what we are going through, it's going to be okay, we can handle it, and God is with us no matter what. That's the blessed assurance of the risen Jesus being present to us from the far side of this world, just beyond the veil, dwelling within us, closer to us than we are to ourselves. A philosopher, Jean-Luc Marion, writes that modern people are mistaken that what they need in life is certainty; even the most certain idea can leave us cold and empty and uninterested in life. What people need in life is assurance, the assurance that we're good, that we're accepted, that we're loved, that we matter, that we're seen. The feeling of blessed assurance is the feeling of the risen Jesus dwelling with us and within us even while we live on in this life and in this world that crucified him and robs us of hope. Blessed assurance is the feeling of Jesus' abiding love. His is a love so strong it outshines the darkness of any despair. Where we are broken with trauma, he will meet us, risen and alive, with his nail-pierced hands. Where we are wracked with guilt and shame, he will meet us, risen and alive, having died a sinner's death. Where we have lost the will to live, he will meet us, risen and alive, having chosen life even from the grave. Where we suffer loss and grief, he will meet us, risen and alive, having lived through total catastrophe.

Jesus is risen! It is good for us to turn to him now.

Thanks be to God. Amen.