

The Rev. John Sampson, Pastor
Glen Ridge Congregational Church

Easter Sunday



Sunday, April 5, 2026

Matthew 28:1 - 10

Will you pray with me?

God, may the words of my mouth, and the meditations of all of our hearts, be acceptable to you, our rock, and our redeemer.

Amen.

Hallelujah!

Christ is risen!

Happy Easter!

On this Easter morning, as the sun rose in the east, God finally responded.

And God said “yes!” - a “yes” that shakes the foundations of all we believe, and everything we have experienced. Because in God’s great “yes”, God has refuted all of the ways humanity has said “no”.

When the Romans said “no” to Jesus’s life and condemned him to the cross, God said “yes,” and emptied the tomb. When Pilate said “no” by washing his hands in apathy, God said “yes” by sending a messenger to the Marys telling them not to be afraid. When Peter said “no,” he was not one of the followers of Jesus, denying his friend and teacher, God said “yes,” and told the disciples to go to Galilee. When Judas said “no,” that his rabbi’s life was not worth more than thirty pieces of silver, God said “yes,” and resurrected the Christ to show that the life of Jesus was a more precious gift than had ever been given before.

Today, we gather in the radiance of God’s holy “yes”, because today, we celebrate Easter, the resurrection of the Christ.

And it is no coincidence that we celebrate this day during the season of spring. The darkness and dormancy of winter have passed. The days are lengthening and growing warmer. The birds are returning. And the first flowers of the year are beginning to bloom. It is as if, all around us, nature has heard God’s “yes” and is responding. Not with words. But in the very act of coming alive again. It’s almost as if they are saying to us that resurrection is not just for Jesus.

On this Easter day, will we follow the example of the natural world, and not simply talk about resurrection, but also be resurrected?

There are so many things in our lives, and in the life of the world that say “no,” even on this Easter morning. There is a war in the Middle East, there

is division in our nation, as a community, we are struggling with sickness and death. It can feel like we continue to live in a wintery landscape, where the promise of life abundant is only grasped as a memory, as something that was and now has died.

But we have heard God's undeniable "yes" by witnessing the empty tomb. Will we say our own "yes" in response?

This is truly a day to celebrate, but the story of Easter is also a sobering story, in that it doesn't deny the reality of the hardness of the human heart, and it doesn't look away from the tragedy of death. But in God's holy "yes" it tells us that the hardness of our hearts, and the reality of death, do not have the final word. They are not the end of the story. Easter tells us that in the darkness of night, in the places of our lives that seem sealed and moribund, something stirs, something enlivens. And that this stirring is undeniable. Easter tells us that there is no human "no" that can resist the awakening of God's "yes", which is God's belief in the value of life filled with blessing. Just as the winter can't resist the daffodils' desire not only to live again, but also to bloom.

Do we, as an Easter people, believe not only in life unbounded by death, but that this new and unexpected life will be filled with glory?

I have been asking all of us many questions in this short reflection, but, in a certain way, it doesn't matter how we answer them. Because long ago, on a dusty road, sometime in the morning, two women met a man they loved, and who they thought they had lost forever. Easter doesn't wait for us, or depend on what we believe. It is a truth that comes unexpectedly and against all of our expectations and assumptions. How could we ever deny it? How could we not respond with our own "yes" that holds all of our deepest longing, all of our dreams, and all of our hopes?

I end this short Easter reflection, on this day when we celebrate the resurrection, by sharing with you one of my favorite passages in all of the Bible. It comes from a book called the Song of Solomon. And although it is not a gospel text, I think it is the perfect passage for Easter. Hear these words:

The voice of my beloved!

*Look, he comes,
leaping upon the mountains,
bounding over the hills.*

*My beloved is like a gazelle
or a young stag.*

*Look, there he stands
behind our wall,
gazing in at the windows,
looking through the lattice.*

My beloved speaks and says to me:

*“Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away,
for now the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.*

*The flowers appear on the earth;
the time of singing has come...*

Hallelujah!

Christ is risen!

Happy Easter!

Amen.

