

## **Easter morning | Community Rising**

Friends of open hearts and open minds: Each spring brings a fresh opportunity to wonder anew about the story of Jesus' empty tomb and its relevance to our lives today. We recognize the tomb of loneliness that touches each of our lives. Many of us are still emerging from patterns of isolation formed during the Covid19 pandemic. Some of us slide along the normalized slippery slope of giving more time to interactions with screens than with the faces and voices of our neighbors.

Yet, amidst our enervating norms of isolation, the crisis of our streets being occupied by federal immigration agents this winter posed an opportunity to emerge as community – an opportunity to which we arose and witnessed neighbors arising. The gospel reading for this morning can teach us lessons about how to continue rising as community.

With eyes open or closed, I invite you to join your hearts with mine in prayer. Holy Loving Spirit, we are grateful for freedom to be gathered for worship today – on our live stream and on this land, which has been loved by First Nations and others across time and where we are now weaving our way of community. Help us to feel your steady, loving presence with us now as we envision emerging from fear, grief, and loneliness to rise together in community. We pray this as followers of our great teacher, Jesus. Amen.

On this Easter morning in 2026, I give thanks for the story of the empty tomb. I have not been alone in wondering across my lifetime why we don't populate our ears and our necks with empty tombs (to represent life emerging out of loss and grief) at least as often as we adorn our ears and necks with our other powerful symbol of the cross (which represents nonviolent resistance to the evil power of oppression). Perhaps we could start a line of empty tomb jewelry.

Let's dive into the lessons offered by today's gospel reading. I hope that one or more might resonate with you – thoughts written down thousands of years ago yet relevant to us today and beyond. When I ask you about how you can take part in community rising, I mean any layer of community (home, school, work, church, neighborhood). And please know that I include myself alongside you. You may hear the word “you” a lot, but I include me. A friend once wondered aloud to me: “Clare, you tend to kind of preach to yourself, don't you?” My response? Yeah, you betchya. I trust others are experiencing the same kind of human struggles that I experience.

From today's reading - First, we can learn to **stay and bear witness - to not look away from suffering**. Those who knew Jesus modeled this for us. They were more than faces in the sea of the crowd. They had known Jesus. Their lives had been affected by him. We heard: *“But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance watching these things.”* I wonder: As you seek to be part of community rising, to whose suffering do you need to bear witness? From whose pain do you need to not look away?

A second teaching: We can learn to **discern what is our particular work to do within a rising community**. Joseph of Arimathea modeled this for us. He was not positioned well to be a loud supporter. Instead, he cared for Jesus in a quiet way, from the heart, with the financial resources at his disposal. We heard: *“This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb.”* I wonder: As you seek to be part of community rising, what is your specific work to do with the resources you possess (be they intellectual, emotional, or financial)? What part of justice might not be done without you?

A third teaching: We can learn to **move into uncomfortable spaces in order to stay faithful in loving one another**.

This was modeled for us by the women who entered into emotionally and physically taxing work in order to care for Jesus beyond his death. We heard: *“The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments.”* I wonder: As you seek to be part of community rising, into what discomfort do you need to move in order to more fully demonstrate love for others?

A fourth teaching: We can **grieve aloud, giving voice to our fear and sorrow so that that those we call community can engage in our grief with us.** Mary of Magdala modeled this for us. She had likely been processing her grief internally. Now her grief sought companionship. We heard: *“They said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.’”* I wonder: As you seek to be part of community rising, what fear or sorrow do you need to voice aloud in order to invite others into space of brave vulnerability?

A fifth teaching: We can **be reciprocally known through relationship – through investment in relationship.** Mary of Magdala and Jesus modeled this for us. They had developed a depth of mutual appreciation as rabbi and disciple. We heard: *“Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ‘Rabbouni!’ (which means Teacher).* I wonder: As you seek to be part of community rising, with whom do you long to deepen your bond such that your sheer presence and voices ring to one another with the sounds of care and affirmation?

A sixth teaching: We can choose to **see one another and, in the seeing, affirm the sacred.** This is modeled for us by Mary of Magdala, Jesus, and other disciples (about whom we’ll hear in coming weeks). We heard this in the blessing written by Jan Richardson: *“You have seen, and so you are already blessed. You have been seen, and so you are the blessing.”*

In case there is any confusion, to be blessed is to be sacred – imbued (each of us) with divine worth. To be a blessing is to give expression to or share in sacredness and divine worth. I wonder: As you seek to be part of community rising, who might need to be blessed by you (affirmed in their divine worth) and from whom might you be humble enough to receive blessing?

A seventh and final teaching: We can **emerge into ever-unfolding life**. In a devotional entitled “Minor Key,” written for today and read among us at the river’s edge this morning, Mary Luti offers these words of compassionate wisdom about emergence – Luti writes: *“Sometimes the world can trust that Easter is true only when our alleluias are slightly bewildered, still blinking in the light, as if they really were emerging from a grave. Sometimes, maybe this year for you, Easter is less a declaration of triumph than an act of sheer hope.”* I wonder: As you seek to be part of community rising, into what spaces and relationships might you more fully emerge?

Friends, may one of these lessons of Easter land with you in such a way that it spurs your growth:

We can learn to stay and bear witness - to not look away from suffering.

We can learn to discern what is our particular work to do within a rising community.

We can learn to move into uncomfortable spaces in order to stay faithful in loving the other.

We can grieve aloud, giving voice to our fear and sorrow so that those we call community can engage in that brave, vulnerable work of grief with us.

We can be reciprocally known through investing in and deepening our relationship.

We can choose to see one another and, in the seeing, affirm the sacred.

We can emerge into ever-unfolding life.

Resurrection love is counting on us. Amen.

Rev. Clare Gromoll

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April 5, 2026 | Easter Sunday

Luke 23:48-24:3 & John 20: 2-18, "Seen: A Blessing For Easter Day"