

Easter Sunday: God's Will for the New Creation

"But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."

1 Corinthians 15:20

Opening Hymn – Jesus Christ is Risen Today

Jesus Christ is risen today, Alleluia! Our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!
Who did once upon the cross, Alleluia! Suffer to redeem our loss. Alleluia!

Hymns of praise then let us sing, Alleluia! Unto Christ, our heav'nly king, Alleluia!
Who endured the cross and grave, Alleluia! Sinners to redeem and save. Alleluia!

Sing we to our God above, Alleluia! Praise eternal as his love; Alleluia!
Praise him, all you heav'nly host, Alleluia! Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Alleluia!

Welcome and Announcements

- Happy Easter
- Newsletter
- Continue to support churches financially
- Reach out if you need anything
- Food Shelf

Invocation and Call to Worship

P In the name of the Father, and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

P Christ is risen!

C He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

P Jesus has come that we may have life, and have it to the fullest. (John 10:10)

C Christ has died.

P In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (1 Peter 1:3)

C Christ is risen.

P For Christ must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. (1 Corinthians 15:25-26)

C Christ will come again.

P God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. (Acts 2:24)

C Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

P Christ is risen!

C He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Confession and Absolution

C Risen and rising Lord, we confess that too often we live as though we had not been given new life in you. We muddle after our own schemes. Forgive us, Lord, for the times we keep the good news of your resurrection to ourselves, hoard the blessings that you give and live as though we were still on the path of despair. Give us your Spirit, the spirit of new life, the spirit of joyful service, the spirit of loving care for all others around us. Make us truly Easter people in this broken world. Fill us with the Spirit so that we might overflow with the serving that proclaims your very presence with us.

P I have the honor and privilege, by the grace of God, of announcing to you the entire forgiveness of your sins. In Jesus Christ, you are forgiven and free—free to share the steadfast love of God with all.

C Alleluia! Amen.

Prayer of the Day

Victorious Lord, you have defeated every one of my enemies. Alleluia! Sin could not stand up to you. Alleluia! Death could not hold you. Alleluia! In your life restored I see your ultimate will for your creation. Lord, I believe your resurrection is only the beginning. I believe there is more to come. And I trust that your eternal victory over sin and death is, and will be, my eternal victory over sin and death. Come quickly, Lord! Alleluia! Amen.

Children's Message - a small stone

Today is Easter Sunday, so today we are going to talk about stones. (*Hold up the stone.*) The women on the way to the tomb where Jesus was buried were worried about the very large stone that was placed in front of the grave. "Who would roll the stone away?" they wondered. That is a reasonable concern because stones are heavy and solid and not easily moved. But when they got to the tomb, what did the women find out about the stone? (*Allow the children*

to respond.) That's right! The stone had been rolled away! And where was Jesus? (*Allow the children to respond.*) That's right! As an angel told the women at the tomb: "He is not here! He has risen, just as he said." Jesus was alive!

Easter reminds us that no matter what stands in our way, Jesus can roll it away! So many things like fear and doubt and sins and anger and hatred and sadness can be like big stones that block us from seeing and celebrating with our risen Christ.

The good news of Easter is that Jesus rolls every one of the heavy burdens in our lives away so we can be with him and he can be with us. Now that he is risen from the grave, nothing will separate us from him anymore. Not even death. When our time on this earth comes to an end, we will be given new life in heaven with him.

How do we respond to this good news of stones rolled away and new life to come? We worship him today in word and song and celebration here in church. And we worship him by going out and telling others about his rising from the dead, just as the women did when they went to the disciples and said, "We have seen the Lord!"

Nothing can stop us now from living for Jesus. Let us pray:

Thank you, dear Jesus, for rising to life for us for our salvation. Thank you for rolling away everything that blocks us from you and for opening the way to life everlasting with you. May we live in the freedom and joy of knowing that our bond with you is solid as a rock. Amen.

Old Testament Reading, Exodus 15:1-21

Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord, saying, "I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host he cast into the sea, and his chosen officers were sunk in the Red Sea. The floods covered them; they went down into the depths like a stone. Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power, your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy. In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries; you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble. At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up; the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them. I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them.' You blew with your wind; the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters. "Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders? You stretched out your right hand; the earth swallowed them. "You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed; you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode. The peoples have

heard; they tremble; pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia. Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed; trembling seizes the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. Terror and dread fall upon them; because of the greatness of your arm, they are still as a stone, till your people, O Lord, pass by, till the people pass by whom you have purchased. You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain, the place, O Lord, which you have made for your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established. The Lord will reign forever and ever.” For when the horses of Pharaoh with his chariots and his horsemen went into the sea, the Lord brought back the waters of the sea upon them, but the people of Israel walked on dry ground in the midst of the sea. Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing. And Miriam sang to them: “Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.”

Epistle Reading, from a letter from Paul to the Corinthians - 1 Corinthians
15:1-6, 12-26

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ... Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Gospel Reading, John 20:1-18 **C: Glory to you O Lord.**

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still

dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes. But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. 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." Having said this, she 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.

Message

Christ is risen! (He is risen indeed! Alleluia!)

Today, as we celebrate the physical resurrection of the corpse of Jesus, the apostle Paul points us to the End of the resurrection story, to the fulfillment of God's ultimate will and purpose for his creation:

"In Christ all will be made alive, but each in turn: Christ, the first fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the End will come ..."

So along with our traditional Easter greeting, we add another acclamation of the Church: I say, "Christ has died; Christ is risen;" and you say, "Christ will come again!"

Let's try it: Christ has died; Christ is risen; (Christ will come again!)

That's how the resurrection story ends; that's my future, and your future; that's what's in store for all who belong to Jesus.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; (Christ will come again!)

But we're not there yet.

Oh, Jesus has already won the victory; the sting of sin and the power of the law have been removed. The grave no longer holds terror for those who are baptized into the death of Jesus, and therefore have also been united to the physical resurrection of Jesus.

And yet, the final, ultimate victory has not happened, at least not fully. People who belong to Jesus still struggle with sin. People who belong to Jesus still get sick. People who belong to Jesus still die.

And if there is one thing Paul wants to make perfectly clear to the Church in his letter to the Corinthians, it's this: as long as even a single human body is still in a grave, Jesus isn't finished yet.

Only when every gravestone is obsolete and every Christian corpse stands redeemed and restored, joined again with a redeemed and restored soul—body and soul together, the way God intended it to be—only then will we see God's ultimate will for his creation. Only then will the resurrection story of Jesus reach its crowning chapter.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; (Christ will come again!)

But we're not there yet, so while we wait, Paul wants to clear up a couple of misunderstandings about the resurrection...

Paul was writing to the church in the Greek city of Corinth, and in ancient Greek mythology, everyone knew that once you died, only your soul made the trip across the River Styx into the underworld. No bodies were allowed. It's also likely that the culture in the greater metropolitan Corinth area would have been very skeptical of the idea of resurrection. One famous Greek playwright, for example, wrote: "When the dust hath drained the blood of a man, once he is slain, there is no resurrection." Dead is dead. Period. End of the story.

Even if some thought the soul lived on in a kind of vague afterlife, no one but no one thought something as vulgar as a corpse had a promising future. If you offered a Greek ghost a body, they'd probably turn you down ... they wouldn't have any need for it.

This narrow hope for a vague kind of life after death did not include your body. And some Greek philosophers suggested there was no hope for your soul, either: when you died, there was no resurrection, no afterworld, no existence: nothing at all. Their skepticism led to the nagging doubt that this life is all there is, there ain't no more.

So it's no wonder that the church in Corinth has drifted a bit from Paul's original message.

The Corinthians combined narrow hope and nagging doubt with the message of Jesus. They were bringing the basic opinions and beliefs of their culture, their theater, their philosophy and entertainment with them into the Church.

And the result? It sounds like some Corinthian Christians were suggesting that we should be content with the life we have in the here and now, rather than imagining some mythological life beyond death. Others seem to have looked forward to a happy future for their souls without regard for their rather embarrassingly physical bodies.

And Paul says, that kind of thinking is just not compatible with faith in Jesus. What at least some of the Corinthians Christians believed, Paul says, isn't the Gospel anymore; it's fake news, fake news about our bodies, fake news about our future, fake news about the Good News. It might make sense in the story our culture tells, but that kind of thinking does not make sense in the resurrection story of Jesus.

So Paul takes us through a string of IF-THEN statements -

- IF physical bodies aren't raised THEN Christ is not raised.
- IF Christ is not raised THEN your faith is worthless.
- IF your faith is worthless THEN you are stuck with your sins, and the dead people you love are just dead.
- IF you are stuck with your sins, and the dead people you love are just dead THEN this religion is a lie, we have no hope, and followers of Jesus are pitiful and disillusioned
- If you don't have the actual resurrection of the body, Paul says, then you don't have Jesus.

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead! That's Paul's basic message in 1 Corinthians 15! Your faith is NOT worthless; you are NOT stuck in sin; the people you love, even if they are dead, are MORE than bodies in the ground; YOU have a strong and powerful HOPE.

Because Christ is risen! (He is risen indeed! Alleluia!)

And more than that, Christ has died; Christ is risen; (Christ will come again!)

In fact, you have a concrete, tangible sign of that coming again. You have the resurrected body of Jesus, what Paul calls the "first fruits" of those who have fallen asleep.

First fruits are the first evidence of more to come. They are like blossoms in spring. We just experience that in spring, don't we? The air gets warmer. The sun is out more. One day just the first of the flowers are beginning to open, and by the next morning, everywhere you look trees and flowers are in full bloom. To experience the first fruits is to already experience what the whole harvest will be like.

Or maybe you have been to an orchard around here or have an apple tree at home, and there's always that first ripe apple that seems to win the race: all the other fruit is green tinted with a little pink, but you find that single deep red fruit. And when you take that first crisp bite, the tangy juice runs down your chin.

The smell, the feel, the taste, the experience of that first ripe apple tells you what the rest of the harvest is going to be like.

In the Old Testament, first fruits are part of the prescribed offering to God. When the first grain was ripe, on the first day after the first Sabbath after Passover ... let's see, that would be today, the Sunday of the Resurrection! On the day Jesus rose from the dead, God's Old Testament people would bring in the first of the harvest of grain to God's house as an offering.

To set aside the first fruits as holy to the Lord acknowledges the God from whom this harvest came. But it is also a statement of trust: hail or lightning or locusts or war could destroy the harvest at any minute. To bring in the first fruits is to express your dependence on God for the rest of the harvest.

The image of firstfruits puts all of those thoughts together. And Paul says, Jesus is like that. He is the first evidence of more to come. His bodily resurrection is the first permanent, physical, New Creation resurrection in history, but it is not going to be the last!

Jesus is the first installment, the opening solo of the New Creation: His resurrected body is part of the New Creation even now, ahead of time.

And if you want to know what the New Creation is like, then look to Jesus and his living body that eats and walks and talks and loves and shares with those he loves. The New Creation looks, feels, smells and tastes like Jesus.

He is the first fruits offering, set aside as holy to God even as we, God's people, depend on God for the rest of the harvest that is still to come.

"In Christ all will be made alive, but each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the End will come ..."

It's clear what Paul wants us to believe, to believe firmly, without a doubt.

And it's also clear that believing firmly, without a doubt, isn't any easier for us than it was for the Corinthians. Like them, we bring the opinions and beliefs of our own culture, our theater, our philosophy and entertainment with us into the Church.

If the narrow hope typical of our culture has infiltrated the Church, then so has a nagging doubt that this life is all there is, there ain't no more. That doubt naturally arises from the

skepticism that seems to characterize our age like no other. All of our understanding of Truth is shaped by our human culture, our human language, the way our human brains work in our human bodies. But honestly, how can we think about the world apart from the way our human brains think? We can only use the tools we have available to us, and whether it's reason or emotion or faith or imagination, we have no direct, disembodied access to the objective truth to everlasting life. How then can we be sure any such truth exists, then?

God knows we have no unmediated access to ultimate truth, so the Ultimate Truth enters into our human culture, where he can be seen and heard and touched; where he can be mocked and tortured and crucified; where he can be raised, and handled, and held onto; where you can put your finger in his nail marks and your hand in his side.

Jesus speaks God's eternal Word in human language, with all the beauty and difficulty that entails. You aren't supposed to have disembodied access to ultimate truth: the only way you are going to find truth is through the embodied presence of Jesus.

The foundation of the faith Paul wants you to cling to today is not an abstract principle, but a human body: the human body of Jesus, that once was a corpse, and now is alive forevermore. Take your narrow hope and your nagging doubt to Jesus. He is the first evidence of more to come. His resurrected body is the first installment – the prelude or opening to something so much more. Christ is risen! (He is risen indeed! Alleluia!)

And there is more to come: "In Christ all will be made alive, but each in turn: Christ, the first fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the End will come ..."

And that ultimate End is Jesus, the battlefield champion, placing his resurrected foot on the neck of the final enemy, Death, and declaring total victory forever and ever. That, Paul says, is the End of the resurrection story. That is God's ultimate will for his creation.

But we're not there yet.

People who belong to Jesus still struggle with sin. People who belong to Jesus still get sick. People who belong to Jesus still die.

And as long as death holds captive even one physical body that belongs to Jesus, Jesus isn't finished with His victory work. Only when every gravestone is obsolete and every Christian corpse stands in a New Creation, only then will we see God's ultimate will for his creation. Only then will the resurrection story of Jesus reach its crowning chapter.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; (Christ will come again!) Amen.

Hymn of the Day: Now All the Vault of Heaven Resounds

Now let the vault of heaven resound. In praise of love that doth abound,
'Christ hath triumphed, hallelujah!
Sing, choirs of angels, loud and clear, repeat their song of glory here,
'Christ hath triumphed, Christ hath triumphed!" Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

Oh fill us, Lord, with dauntless love; Set heart and will on things above,
That we conquer through thy triumph; Grant grace sufficient for life's day,
That by our life we ever say, 'Christ hath triumphed, and he liv eth!
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!...

Prayers

O Risen Christ, we laud and worship you for rising from grave. Help us to make you first in our life of faith and trust in you as our leader. Let us never put ourselves before you, but give of ourselves first to you and then to one another, O Christ, who rose from the grave to give us new life, **let us live as your new creations.**

Like the women who came to your tomb, we are often filled with fear and worry about the future. Roll away all that keeps us from drawing near to you and trusting in you fully. Fill us with confidence and peace in knowing that you will never leave us or forsake us. O Christ, who rose from the grave to give us new life, **let us live as your new creations.**

As Easter people, compel us to spread joy and share the saving news of your death and resurrection with all whom we meet. Let us be your ambassadors of hope to the hurting, bringing release to the captive and healing to the downcast. May we truly live as your new creations, bringing honor and glory only to you. O Christ, who rose from the grave to give us new life, **let us live as your new creations.**

Bring to new life the unity of spirit in our faith communities. Bind us as one in our efforts to live as your forgiven and redeemed people who reach out in love to our neighbors. Rid us of any divisions and help us to support one another in our common goal of making you known to all. O Christ, who rose from the grave to give us new life, **let us live as your new creations.**

As we await the day of your return, be with those who struggle here on earth with sickness and injury, grief and pain, especially Margie and Sonya, Roger and Marlis, Jeff and Evonne, Kirk and Byron, the family of Steve and all those that we name silently now in our hearts..... Instill in them a reliance on your grace and mercy and a dependence on your good and gracious will for them. O Christ, who rose from the grave to give us new life, **let us live as your new creations.**

All these petitions we offer in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, who did the will of God and lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Meal – Word of Institution

Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection and ascension, we await his coming in glory.
Pour out your Holy Spirit, that by this Holy Communion we may know the unity we share with all your people in the body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Our father who art in heaven hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen

After Communion Prayer

Wellspring of joy, through this meal you have put gladness in our hearts. Satisfy the hunger still around us and send us as joyful witnesses, that your love may bring joy to the hearts of all people through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Benediction

After they had witnessed the resurrection, the women were told to go and tell, to share what Jesus had done. You have been given the same privilege...go and tell! As you go, you go with the blessing of our God: The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious unto you, the Lord look upon you with favor, and give you peace. In the name of the Father, the +Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn – I Know that My Redeemer Lives

I know that my Redeemer lives; what comfort this sweet sentence gives!
He lives, he lives, who once was dead; he lives, my ever-living head.

He lives triumphant from the grave; he lives eternally to save,
He lives all-glorious in the sky; he lives exalted there on high.

He lives, all glory to his name! He lives, my Jesus, still the same.
Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives, “I know that my Redeemer lives!”

Palms/Lilly Donations:

In honor of our Confirmation students – Macie, Autumn and Reed by Pastor Michele
In memory of Alden & Shirley Rensvold, Art & Cora Rensvold and Carol Rensvold by Diane Rensvold.
In memory of Margaret (Dawn’s mother) by Dawn, Scott, Hunter and Reed Volden
In memory of LeRoy & Dorothy Dosland and Ted & Naomi Pachi by Margaret and Mardy Dosland
In memory of Art & Franky Cleveland by the Clevelands
In memory of Terry Gjervold by Sandy and Wayne Gjervold
In memory of Kathy Pingree by Don Pingree

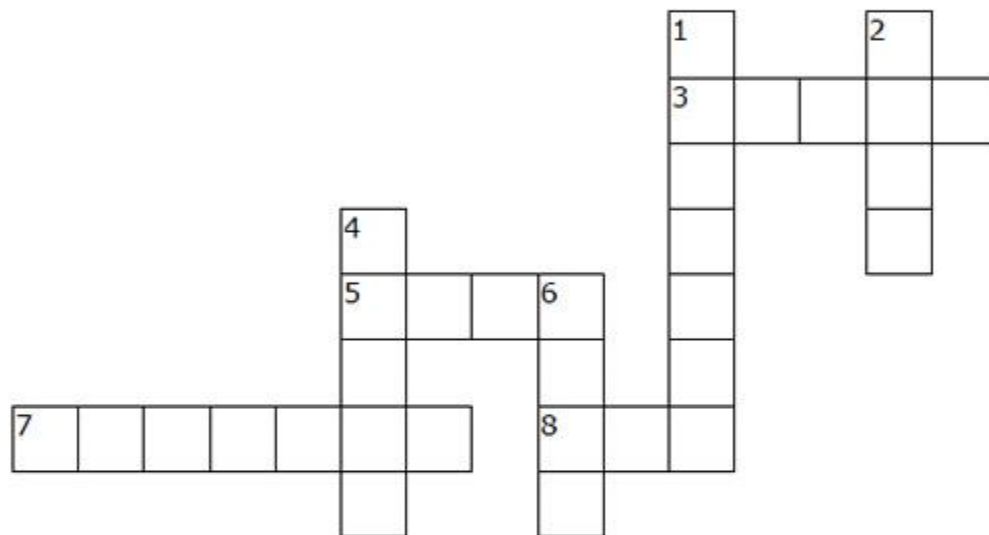
Mark your calendars:

- Sunday, April 11th – 9AM at Kirkebo – Council meeting following service
- Sunday, April 18th – 9AM at Nora – Council meeting following service

Surprise! It's Empty!

They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. Luke 24:2-3 (NIV)

Based on Luke 24:1-12



ACROSS

3. "He is not here, he has _____." Luke 24:6
5. A place where someone, especially an important person, is buried
7. The first or early part of a day
8. A period of twenty-four hours

DOWN

1. To kill someone by tying or nailing them to a cross
2. A period of seven days
4. A hard solid substance found in the ground which is often used for building
6. The whole physical structure that forms a person

MORNING	BODY	RISEN	STONE
DAY	CRUCIFY	TOMB	WEEK

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A G K Y T Q S P I C E S X E F
 A R D T T C G H R J T V H N F
 F O F R G N D E Y O G W Y T R
 B U Z J I C C H E P L V V E I
 W N W V C N T B W X S L R R G
 G D I D E C V R S O D T E E H
 B L P S S C Y V E R M A O D T
 R H I E B R D B B M S E Y N G
 Y R G D Z B G D A C E F N N E
 I F I R S T B O W E D M I L B
 V D F D G B A R L F A N B R Z
 H X E A X W W C V W R O T E R
 M Y J A C E A I R O Y V O X R
 H I G D D E Y M M S Q N M U K
 Y T R D S K S Z B H P M B F C

BOWED	FACES	GROUND	MORNING	RISEN
WOMEN	WEEK	FRIGHT	STONE	LIVING
ROLLED	FIRST	REMEMBER	DAY	DEAD
TOMB	AWAY	SPICES	ENTERED	BODY