



## By the waters of Babylon...

A common liturgy during a time of physical separation

### **April 12, 2020 – Easter**

*After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. (Matthew 28:1-10)*

#### **Call to Worship**

Especially this year it is tempting to jump right into the “alleluias”  
To lean into the promise of budding flowers and trumpets blowing.

Don't.

Spend a bit of time first with the women as they approach the tomb in deep grief.  
Dutiful. Mournful.

#### **Call to Confession**

*There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. (Matthew 28:2-3)*

#### **Prayer of Confession**

**God of the empty tomb, we shake in our boots when we allow ourselves to remember our sins. Promises broken. Need ignored. Faith depleted. Forgive us, God. Forgive our lack of faith and our lack of action. Forgive our fear. In the name of the One who is Risen, Amen.**

#### **Assurance of Pardon**

*The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. (Matthew 28:5-6a)*

Hear the good news! Who is in a position to condemn? Only Christ, and Christ died for us, Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us. In Jesus the Christ, we are forgiven.

**Response** If you know this hymn, sing it. If you don't know this hymn... sing it!

1 Jesus Christ is ris'n today, Alleluia!  
our triumphant holy day, Alleluia!  
who did once upon the cross Alleluia!  
suffer to redeem our loss. Alleluia!

2 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!

3 But the pains which he endured, Alleluia!  
our salvation have procured; Alleluia!  
now above the sky he's King, Alleluia!  
where the angels ever sing. Alleluia!

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



### **Scripture**

Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

### **Meditation**

Where do these momentous events occur? What is your association with this place normally?

Look at the dialogue in the story and compare the words of the angel and those of the Risen Lord. Where are they alike? Different? Where are the imperatives in the words of the angel? Jesus?

How is this story happening in the world around you?

### **Parallel Readings**

From *A Grief Observed*, by C.S. Lewis

One moment last night can be described in similes, otherwise it won't go into language at all. Imagine a man in total darkness. He thinks he is in a cellar or dungeon. Then there comes a sound from far off – waves or wind-blown trees or cattle half a mile away. And if so, it proves he's not in a cellar, but free, in the open air. Or it may be a much smaller sound close at hand – a chuckle of laughter. And if so, there is a friend just beside him in the dark. Either way, a good, good sound. I'm not mad enough to take such an experience as evidence for anything. It is simply the leaping into imaginative activity of an idea which I would always have theoretically admitted – the idea that I, or any mortal at any time, may be utterly

mistaken as to the situation he is really in.... and more than once, that impression which I can't describe except by saying that it's like the sound of a chuckle in the darkness. The sense that some shattering and disarming simplicity is the real answer.

From *The Martian Chronicles* by Ray Bradbury

"Where are you from?" asked the Martian at last.

"Earth."

"What is that?"

"There." Tomas nodded to the sky.

"When?"

"We landed over a year ago, remember?"

"No."

"And all of you were dead, all but a few. You're rare, don't you *know* that?"

"That's not true."

"Yes, dead. I saw the bodies. Black, in the rooms, in the houses, dead. Thousands of them."

"That's ridiculous. We're *alive!*"

"Mister, you're invaded, only you don't know it. You must have escaped."

"I haven't escaped; there was nothing to escape. What do you mean? I'm on my way to a festival now at the canal, near the Eniall Mountains. I was there last night. Don't you see the city there?" The Martian pointed.

Tomas looked and saw the ruins. "Why, that city's been dead thousands of years."

The Martian laughed. "Dead. I slept there yesterday!"

"And I was in it a week ago and the week before that, and I just drove through it now, and it's a heap. See the broken pillars?"

"Broken? Why, I see them perfectly. The moonlight helps. And the pillars are upright."

"There's dust in the streets," said Tomas.

"The streets are clean!"

"The canals are empty right there."

"The canals are full of lavender wine!"

"It's dead."

"It's alive!" protested the Martian

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The Martian grew very serious. "Tell me again. You do not see the city the way I describe it? The pillars very white, the boats very slender, the festival lights — oh, I see them *clearly!* And listen! I can hear them singing. It's no space away at all."

Tomas listened and shook his head. "No."

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The Martian closed his eyes and opened them again. "This can only mean one thing. It has to do with Time. Yes. You are a figment of the Past!"

"No, you are from the Past," said the Earth Man, having had time to think of it now.

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"Let us agree to disagree," said the Martian. "What does it matter who is Past or Future, if we are both alive, for what follows will follow, tomorrow or in ten thousand years. How do you know that those temples are not the temples of your own civilization one hundred centuries from now, tumbled and

broken? You do not know. Then don't ask. But the night is very short. There go the festival fires in the sky, and the birds."

Tomas put out his hand. The Martian did likewise in imitation.

Their hands did not touch; they melted through each other.

### **Charge and Benediction**

This year, more than other years, perhaps... the world needs to hear this good news.  
Jesus tells the women to go and tell his brothers to go to Galilee where they will see him.

Who will you tell?

Be blessed by the One who has created you, and redeemed you.  
Know that our God will sustain you.  
Now. Now and forevermore.

Amen.

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Much of this service is based on work by The Bible Workbench, Volume 6, Issue 3

Bradbury, R. (2012). *The martian chronicles*. Simon and Schuster.

Lewis, C. S. (2001). *Grief observed*. Zondervan.