

Sermon, April 5, 2026
Easter Sunday
“The Holy Pointing”
A Sermon by Rev. John Balicki
St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, Wilton, Maine

One day, three men were walking along and came upon a raging, violent river. They needed to get across to the other side, but had no idea how to do it. The first man prayed to God saying, “Please, God, give me the strength to cross this river. *Poof!* God gave the man big arms and strong legs, and he was able to swim across the river in about two hours.

Seeing this, the second man prayed to God, saying, “Please, God, give me the strength to cross this river.” *Poof!* God gave him a rowboat and he was able to row across the river in about one hour.

The third man, seeing how things had worked out for the other two, also prayed to God, saying, “Please, God, give me the strength and ability and intelligence to cross this river.” And *poof!* God turned him into a woman; she looked at the map, then walked across the bridge.

While our joke may sound like a bit of male-bashing, one has to ask on the morning of the resurrection, where were the men? If you read through any of the four gospels, it is mainly men who accompany Jesus through Galilee and eventually to Jerusalem though there are notable exceptions. The disciples he had spent years teaching – those with whom he had shared his abundant life. Now they were nowhere to be found. Interested only in saving their own skins. But were the women expecting to see what they saw? An empty tomb? An angel? A voice? In some accounts the risen Jesus himself? I think our skit exaggerates a bit how quickly the women came to awareness.

Alyce MacKenzie says it this way,
For some of us, Easter Sunday isn’t so much a mountaintop we access with effortless grace. It’s more like that piece of playground equipment we used to play on in grade school. The big round flat platform with the metal handles – lots of kids could get on and whirl around if one would push with his foot. Other kids would try to jump on as the wheel came around, but if you missed it this time, you had to wait until it came around again to get on. ... How odd that in this account of the first Easter, none of the disciples seems fully ready for Easter joy. All four gospels concur that the Resurrection took them by surprise!

Which leads to the more personal question – are we ready for easter? Perhaps you’ve tried to get ready? Found those spring clothes – lighter weight, lighter colors maybe rebelling against putting on that winter stuff, hats, mittens, gloves even if you know you might be a bit cold But has it made you feel like Easter?

Maybe you tried harder? Sent Easter cards to loved ones? Candy for the younger members of the family or maybe the older ones too? Bought some flowers for the house. Did it work?

Another way of saying this is perhaps that resurrection isn’t a proposition to be believed in, but is a condition to be felt. Now believing in the resurrection is not heading down the wrong road. We’ll do that in our class on Resurrecting Easter that starts next Sunday. But perhaps it’s more a feeling we’re chasing which is why we go to the effort of clothes, candy, cards, flowers.

Robin Amis points out that the early Church Fathers maintained that the Resurrection of Jesus existed in three ways. The Resurrection existed outside us, as a single event *from the past*. Second, the Resurrection existed *in the future* as the consummation of the life of faith. Third, the Resurrection existed *at any moment*. It was always present and accessible for those who asked for it. The grace of the Holy Spirit imbued the heart and mind with the Presence of the Resurrected Lord, and a “knowingness” came with it.

It is this knowingness, this feeling that we are after. And knowingness can be communicated more with symbol than word – shocking to an Episcopalian with a thousand page Prayer Book.

If the words don’t help, we try to help with symbols:

We do it through Water. When we are sprinkled, the water that hits us is the water of our baptisms, the water that has brought us into this new life.

We do it with our Paschal candle whose flame symbolizes the light of Christ celebrated at Easter, and that continues to burn in our hearts today dispelling the darkness of despair.

We do it through the Bread of Life and the Wine of Salvation shared at Communion.

We do it through a multiplicity of alleluias, expressing our joy in the risen Lord.

Maybe all that is helping, maybe not, which is why we have an Easter Season of 50 days to immerse ourselves in these symbols: candle, water, bread and wine, alleluias. Like 40

days of Lent we have 50 days of Easter, because for most, despite so many best efforts, even though we may have on our Easter outfit, we may not always feel like Easter inside. Take time, Thomas needed a week, heck most of them needed a long time. Paul didn't write about it for 15 years, the gospel writers needed 40 and beyond.

So it's not a problem if words fail us, if we can't clearly and precisely defend the resurrection of Jesus. If we have that knowingness, that feeling we can be like the great Jewish mystic and scholar, Martin Buber, who although he had written over thirty published books and many more writings, denied being a prophet or a philosopher or a theologian. He said simply, "I am only someone who has seen something and who goes to the window and points."

And so it was with the ineffable, breath-catching, hair-raising manifestation of Jesus as the New Creation. All the women and the disciples could do after the Resurrection was to "go to the window and point." And they did. Again and again and again. And the Holy Spirit's power would gift to the open hearts and minds of those among the disciples to look out the window for themselves and believe with lifechanging consequences. What are those consequences? Megan McKenna says it this way:

It's bringing hope into a situation, bringing joy that shatters despair, forgiving others and giving them back dignity and the possibility of a future with others in community, listening to others and affirming them and their life, speaking the truth in public confronting injustice – yes – that's how I bring people back from the dead."

Each Easter we are called to join this great cloud of witnesses, these holy pointers, to hop on the merry go round, to find some unmitigated joy in knowing that He is Risen. Alleluia.