



Message: *Easter Light was Born in the Dark* | Easter, April 5, 2026 | Speaker: **Pastor Eddie Eddy**

**Pastoral Prayer:**

When everything was dark and it seemed that the sun would never shine again, your love broke through. Your love was too strong, too wide, too deep for death to hold. The radiance cast by your love spread and burst forth with resurrection light.

Gracious God, We praise you for the light of new life made possible through Jesus. We praise you for the light of new life that shone on the first witnesses of resurrection. We praise you for the light of new life that continues to shine in our hearts today.

We pray that the Easter light of life, hope and joy, will live in us each and every day...and that we will be bearers of that light into the lives of others.

God of Awesome Joy, be with us this day as we celebrate the resurrection of your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Let the light of your love flood into our lives and through us to all those who have been captured by darkness, that the light may give them healing, freedom and hope. As we witness the surprise of the empty tomb, the appearance of the Savior to Mary, and her good news brought to the disciples, let us remember that this good news exists for us today. Darkness does not win. Death is not victorious. Christ is Risen, for us, all of us.

We are grateful Lord that you sit at the right hand of God and pray with and for us. We are thankful that you hear all the prayers we lift to you. We are blessed that you call us to go...and to share your light in the darkness of our brothers and sisters lives.

We are raised with Christ to a new life of hope and service. Let the joy of this good news swirl around in our hearts. Let excitement for service and ministry burst forth from us. Let us truly be the "Easter People" that you have called us to be. For we ask these things in the name of the Risen Lord, Jesus Christ. **Lord's Prayer AMEN.**

John 20:1-18 New International Version (NIV)

**The Empty Tomb**

20 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. 2 So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. 4 Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, 7 as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. 8 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. 9 (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) 10 Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

11 Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb 12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

13 They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." 14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

15 He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

16 Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

18 Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

L: This is the word of God for the people of God.

**P: Thanks be to God**

### **Easter Light was Born in the Dark**

If you were an artist and someone asked you to paint an Easter picture, I'm pretty sure I know where you would begin. Almost certainly, you would begin with some kind of light. Somewhere in your picture you would show the sun...just breaking over the horizon. That's why so many churches have a sunrise service on Easter Sunday. Light breaking through the darkness is the very essence of this day.

This feeling is so deep that we expect nature itself to cooperate with us... don't we? If Easter morning begins overcast or raining or snowing, it's almost like we think God has forgotten what day it is. Easter is supposed to be bright, cheerful, overflowing with life. Dark, gloomy weather is all right on Good Friday; we may not like it, but we know...for that day...it's almost appropriate. But not Easter. Easter shouts sunshine and flowers and life! That's the expectation for Easter.

But the real truth is...that isn't the way the Bible tells the story. Remember how our scripture lesson of the day begins? "Early...on the first day of the week...while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb."

The man who wrote the gospel of John was an artist with words and images. He wasn't using words casually when he recalled the first Easter by telling us that "it was still dark." Like a master screenwriter, he was setting the stage for us, preparing us for what was to follow in this illuminating story.

You see, John — who gave us this gospel — emphasized the theme of light and darkness throughout his entire book. He even started his Gospel that way. The first paragraph of the Gospel of John tells us that God's Son came into the world as **light**, and that this "**light...shines in the darkness,**" and that the darkness is never able to overcome it.

But now...as we come to the end of John's story, it starts to look as if the darkness has actually found a way to overcome the light. Jesus, the Son of God, has been condemned in court, he's been beaten beyond recognition, he was humiliated, nailed to the cross, died...the sky went black...and then...he was sealed away in a borrowed tomb.

The mood is dark. He is dead. So, John makes sure we know that when one of his devoted followers, Mary Magdalene, returns to the tomb, she comes "in the dark".

#### PAUSE

As far as Mary Magdalene was concerned, it wasn't simply the darkness of early morning though. In truth, with the death of Jesus, all the light in Mary's life had gone.

Before Jesus appeared in Mary's world...maybe two or even three years earlier...Mary had been living in perpetual darkness. Whether it was high noon or midnight, sunrise or sunset, it was all the same to Mary Magdalene... darkness. We don't **know** all the details about her story, but history has painted a pretty gloomy past for her.

It was said that at one point she harbored 7 demons. This was the first-century way of saying that Mary was full of the devil. Evil had such control of her life that it seems that she was hell-bent on self-destruction. The dark cloud that followed her seemed to keep her in perpetual darkness.

Then one day — we don't know where or how or when — she met a young man named Jesus and rumor had it that he could cast out those demons that plagued her. And he did. And on that day...Mary's darkness was overcome by light.

Before that day...people may have avoided her out of fear that her darkness may be contagious. But now...now that Jesus had come into her life...now they **wanted** to be near her. Because to be near Mary now...it was like getting a transfusion of light for the soul. Now a radiance shone from her.

Have you ever noticed that when we read about Mary... she is often the first one mentioned? That new light that she emits just draws people close. She was a "natural leader" now that "the light" had come into her life.

#### Pause

But that was before the soldiers took Jesus and the cowardly courts unfairly condemned him, and before the crowds bellowed for his blood. That was before they drained his body and laid him...lifeless...it in a tomb. Jesus was gone...and now...the light had gone out of Mary's life. No wonder that the gospel writer says that when she made her way to the tomb, it was **dark**.

I'm quite confident...that John...purposely intends to tell us more about that morning other than...the sun hadn't yet risen. He isn't the least bit concerned about what time of day it was...he is giving us an explicit description of Mary's state of mind, as well as the minds of all Jesus' followers. Folks...I would go as far as saying...making a profound, philosophical statement about the condition of the entire human race that day. It was dark. As dark as hell.

I want you to come with me just for a moment or two, farther back in the story. In fact, as far back as the beginning of our human recollection, as the Bible tells it. Come to that time when the Bible says that humanity was living in a garden, a paradise, the Garden of Eden. It was there that the human race went off track, it was there that Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden...and because of their choices...received the sentence of death. Separation from the light. And the human race has been under that death sentence ever since.

That is the darkness the world experiences. The darkness the world offers. Whatever joy life might bring, there was always an end to it. Whenever there was a celebration, whether it was a wedding, or a birth, or a victory in war or a bountiful harvest festival, they knew it would come to an end.

It's the same with human relationships: No matter how much you loved someone, you couldn't keep that person forever, because either the person would leave you or you would have to leave that person. That's what death is all about.

Some philosophers taught that it was better that we should never love anybody, because to do so was only to build ourselves up to the bitter disappointment of losing that person... either because that person would die or because we would. Death had come into our world, and with death...came the darkness. No matter how lovely the light that any day or any event or any person might bring, darkness would eventually destroy the their light.

So...John's gospel has it right when it tells us that when Mary Magdalene came to the tomb that morning, **it was dark**. It was dark for Mary, as I've already said, because the light of her life, the one who had broken through her darkness at some point before, was now gone. To her...The Darkness had won again! It always did, it seemed for her. As far back as Mary could remember, darkness always had a way of coming out on top. Today was just one more victory for death and loss. John was giving us a deeper insight to why Mary showed up to the garden in the dark.

So when she got there and found an empty tomb...the idea that a miracle had taken place wasn't the first thought that popped into her mind. She just figured that some cruel, vicious person had stolen Jesus' body. Can you imagine...Mary must have thought...how can it get any darker?

She couldn't bear this alone so she took off for a place where she may find just a hint of light that could be left in her world. She ran to tell John and Peter. After they came to the tomb and saw it empty...they went back home. But Mary stayed there. And even though the sun had started to rise...Mary's inner darkness was still there.

As far she knew, so was the whole world, the whole human race was still in the dark, just like she was.

As she stood there...lost...in the dark...full of despair...weeping there...she heard a voice. It must be a gardener she thought, asking her why she was crying. Mary explained that apparently someone had moved Jesus' body, and she asked the man where they had taken it. And the voice answered ever so lightly, "Mary". Instantly...Mary knew that it was her Lord. And the darkness rolled away. For Mary, and for all of us. That's when death lost its power, and life won. That is when the power of darkness was broken, because the Easter light was born in the darkness.

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This is the great, good news I bring you on this Easter Sunday. Easter was not born in the sunlight; Easter was born in the dark. And it still comes to us in the dark. Whatever the dark place may be in your life — however fearfully dark that place may be — The light of Easter beams through, in the person of our living Lord. Because when the **power of death** was broken by the resurrection of Jesus, **all...all** the power of darkness was broken in all the other dark places of life.

Easter People...where do you experience darkness?

Is it the gloom of some habit that you can't break? Or maybe you hold onto the dark thoughts you hate to acknowledge...even to yourself? Or is your dark place simply that collection of unfulfilled dreams, or a loneliness so deep that sometimes it makes you feel like you have a black hole where your heart should be. Or is it fear — fear of someone, of some memory, of a loss...a fear of death itself?

Whatever your darkness is, I want to tell you that the same Lord who came to Mary Magdalene so long ago in that early morning darkness of a dewy garden...stands ready on this Easter Sunday to come to you, to oust the darkness from your life by the very power of the eternal Light that is in him. That's because Easter was born in the dark, and wherever there is darkness, Easter comes each and every day...to bring its magnificent light. By God's grace, may it be your light today.

To God be the Glory! Amen.

### **Closing Prayer with Offering Dedication**

Risen and Living God,  
we come before You as Easter people—  
grateful that Your light has broken into our darkness  
and that the empty tomb declares hope is alive.

Just as You called Mary by name in the darkness ,  
call to us again, Lord.

Meet us in the places where we still struggle,  
and shine Your resurrection light into every shadow of our lives.

We thank You that death does not have the final word,  
and that in Christ, life and victory are ours.

And now, we offer these gifts to You.  
Receive our tithes and offerings as an act of worship and trust.  
Use them to carry Your light into our community and beyond,  
so that others may come to know the hope we celebrate today.

Take not only what we give,  
but who we are,  
and use us for Your glory.

We pray this in the name of our risen Savior, Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

### **Next Steps:**

- I will read John 20:1-18 this week
- I will invite someone to Worship next Sunday