

RESURRECTION OF THE LORD/ EASTER DAY

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SCRIPTURE PASSAGE/ LECTORY WEEK:

Matthew 28:1-10

SOCIAL PRINCIPLES/
BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REFERENCES:

¶162 The Social Community, Other Social Issues, F.

OBJECTIVE:

Students will be able to describe Jesus' interaction with women at the tomb and identify the ways God defies cultural and societal limitations on the potential of women and girls.

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

paper, writing utensils, United Methodist Hymnal or copies of "Christ the Lord is Risen Today"

LESSON PLAN STRUCTURE (1 HOUR)

CENTERING MOMENT (5 MINUTES)

Say: We are going to experience a familiar Easter hymn in a different way. Instead of singing, 'Christ the Lord is Risen Today,' we are going to hear it as a poem. Listening to it this way helps us slow down and really take in the meaning of the words.

(Ask for volunteers or have everyone read a line.)

Say: Each person will read one line out loud, slowly and clearly as if you are reading a poem, not a song. After each line is read, everyone together will respond by saying 'Alleluia.' As you listen, try not to rush ahead. Let the words sink in. Notice any phrase that surprises you, comforts you, or makes you curious.

Spoken Reading:

"Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!

Earth and heaven in chorus say, Alleluia!

Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!

Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply, Alleluia!

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Love's redeeming work is done, **Alleluia!**

Fought the fight, the battle won, **Alleluia!**

Death in vain forbids him rise, **Alleluia!**

Christ has opened paradise, **Alleluia!**

Lives again our glorious King, **Alleluia!**

Where, O death, is now thy sting? **Alleluia!**

Once he died our souls to save, **Alleluia!**

Where's thy victory, boasting grave? **Alleluia!**

Soar we now where Christ has led, **Alleluia!**

Following our exalted Head, **Alleluia!**

Made like him, like him we rise, **Alleluia!**

Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, **Alleluia!"**

(Brief Pause)

Say: Ours the cross, the grave, the skies. Amen.

SCRIPTURE STUDY (25 MIN.)

Say: Today we are going to read one of the resurrection stories found in Matthew 28:1-10. As I read, I want to invite you to close your eyes or look down at the floor. Try to listen not just for what happens, but for the emotions in the story, the feelings, the tension, the surprise. Notice any word or moment that stands out to you.

(Read Matthew 28:1-10 slowly)

Say: Let's talk about what we heard.

Discussion Questions:

- What were the women at the tomb likely feeling when they arrived? (*Sadness, grief, confusion, fear.*)
- What happened when the angel appeared? (*The ground shoo; the angel appeared in dazzling white with blinding light.*)

NOTES

If students are uncomfortable closing their eyes, they may avert their gaze or focus on an object.

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- What was the impact of the angel's sudden appearance? (*The guards were terrified; the women were afraid.*)
- What message did the angel want to share? And who was the angel speaking to? (*Jesus is alive; the angel spoke directly to the women.*)
- How did the women respond to the angel's message? (*They were afraid, but they ran in obedience and joy.*)
- Who were surprised the women on their way to the disciples? How did they respond? (*Jesus; they fell at his feet and worshiped him.*)
- How did Jesus reinforce the angel's message? (*He told them to go and tell the disciples, too.*)

Say: To really understand how powerful this moment is, we need to remember the context. In Jesus' time, women had very little social or political power. While the Old Testament names a few women as prophets, society was deeply patriarchal. The temple itself was gender-separated. Men were priests. Women had limited access to religious leadership. Politically, women could not hold office, and they weren't even considered reliable witnesses in legal proceedings. And yet, God chose women to be the first witnesses of the resurrection.

Say: Our Social Principles as United Methodists teach us that gender diversity and equality are gifts of God.

Reflection Questions:

- How do we see God empowering women through this resurrection story? (*Possible responses: Jesus trusted them as messengers; the angel spoke directly to them; Jesus appeared to them first.*)
- What can we learn about God's view of women from this passage? (*God values women more highly than society does; God entrusts women with the Gospel; God empowers women for leadership and service.*)

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Say: In the resurrection, we see Jesus freed from the tomb and women freed to proclaim the good news. Ours is a God who cannot be captured, silenced, crucified, or defeated by death. Ours is a God who consistently works in ways bigger than we can ask or imagine bringing life, hope, and liberation to all.

GROUP ACTIVITY (25 MIN.)

A Big, Genderful God in a Tiny, Binary World

Say: Today we are going to talk about gender, the world we live in, and the kind of God we believe in. Our world often tries to fit people into small, rigid boxes, especially around gender. But scripture shows us a God who is vast, creative, relational, and bigger than human categories; a big, genderful God living in a tiny, binary world.

Say: This conversation might feel challenging at times. That's okay. Our goal is not to debate or label each other, but to listen, notice patterns, and reflect on where we see inequality and what God might be calling us to do about it.

Say: We are going to break into small groups of 3-4 people. Each group will receive a piece of paper and something to write with. Divide your paper into three columns, you can fold it or draw lines. Label the columns:

- cis men
- cis women
- trans/nonbinary/ intersex people

Say: Here are some terms we'll be using. You don't need to memorize them, just use them as tools for conversation.

- Cis: people who affirm the gender they were assigned at birth
- Trans: people who identity as a gender different from what they were assigned at birth
- Non-binary: people who do not fit into the binary categories of 'male' or 'female'

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- Intersex: people born with a variety of differences in their sex traits and reproductive anatomy

Say: Each group will focus on one area of life. As a group, you'll identify roles you've seen people of different genders play in that area.

- Group 1: Media (film, TV, streaming, social media)
- Group 2: Church life (your church or the wider Christian church)
- Group 3: Family
- Group 4: Government

(If needed, additional topics can include education, business, or science.)

Say: You'll have about 10 minutes to talk and take notes. As you make your lists, focus especially on two key questions:

- Where do you notice inequality?
- Why do you think those inequalities exist? What forces keep people in these roles?

The lists are helpful, but what matters most is your conversation and reflection. Before time is up, choose one person to report back to the larger group.

(Pause for activity, leader circulates, listening and offering gentle guidance if needed.)

Say: Let's come back together. I'll invite each group to share briefly. Please keep report-backs short so everyone has time.

(After each group shares, affirm patterns rather than debating details. If you are tight on time, feel free to have the groups share their overall conclusions, such as: rigidly defined binary roles, women underrepresented in leadership, trans, nonbinary, and intersex invisibility, lack of representation, policies that keep trans people on the margins)

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Say: When we look at these patterns, it's clear that we still have a lot of work to do in the world. That can feel overwhelming. It can feel heavy. It can feel impossible. But today is Easter. Jesus is risen, indeed! And resurrection means that what seems stuck, broken, or lifeless does not get the final word. We believe in a God who breaks open tombs, defies small categories, and calls each of us to live fully into who we are. Beloved, valued, and gifted. God is eager for each of us to live into our potential as followers of Christ, working toward justice, dignity, and life for all.

CLOSING MOMENT (5 MIN.)

Say: I invite you now to take a reflective, contemplative posture. You might close your eyes, lower your head, or fold your hands in prayer, whatever feels the most comfortable for you.

(Pause)

Say: As we close, let's remember that Jesus entrusted the news of the resurrection to women, women who were trusted, courageous, and faithful.

Say: For the next few moments, I invite you to think of one woman in your life, trans or cis, whom you trust deeply. Someone you could turn to for advice. Someone you could lean on in a hard moment.

(Pause)

Say: It might be a friend, a parent, or caregiver, a teacher, a coach, a relative, anyone who comes to mind.

(Long pause)

Say: Hold that person in your thoughts. Now, quietly in your heart, ask God to bless her and empower her, for her gifts, her strength, and her life.

(Long pause)

Say: Think about what you would want to tell this woman about herself. What words of encouragement or affirmation does she need to hear? What truth would you want her to know about how much she matters?

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(Long pause)

Say: Now, take a deep breath with me."

(Leader breathes slowly.)

Say: Breathe in... and breathe out. Again, breathe in... and breathe out...

(Pause)

Say: Gently open your eyes. Look up. Now go and bring her the good news: that she is valued by you, valued by God, and deeply loved. Amen.