

Gracegrams

April 2020

Monthly Newsletter of Grace in the Desert

Mark Your Calendar

April 5

Palm Sunday Worship via Facebook
"The King Who Comes"

April 9

Maundy Thursday Worship via Facebook
"Poured Out"

April 10

Good Friday Tenebrae Worship via Facebook
"The Way of Sorrows"

April 12

Easter Worship via Facebook
"You Will See Him"

April 19

Worship via Facebook
"What's Doubt Got to Do with Fear?" (Fear Introduction)

April 26

Worship via Facebook
"Choosing to Please God ... Or People?" (Fear of Rejection)

He Is Risen He Is Risen, Indeed! Alleluia!

In ordinary times, these words ring out through all of the Christian world on Easter Sunday morning – Resurrection Day! But this year is different ... we will be celebrating Easter Sunday, for the most part, in our own homes, with our immediate families. There will generally not be family gatherings or Easter egg hunts or big ham dinners. In fact, it was tempting to put this article further down in the Newsletter this month in light of all that is going on ... but that would be to minimize the importance of this milestone in the history of the Church. For it was on this day that Jesus rose from the dead – it was on this day that He conquered sin and death and the devil – for us. ☺

COVID-19 cannot stop us from celebrating that one important fact - -that God loved the world – and us – so much that He sent His Son to die for us on that first Good Friday so that we could be free of all that keeps us in the

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He is Risen Continued

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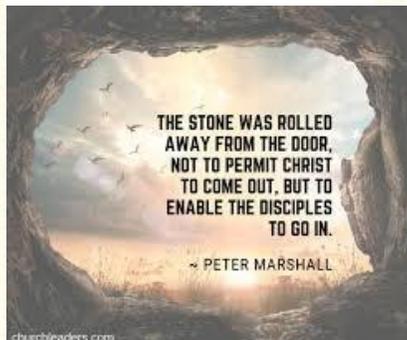
bondage of sin. I don't care if we celebrate alone or with our immediate family or with a stadium full of people – that Truth is what drives us and nothing can take that away from us.

So ... even though we can't celebrate together this year, let's still celebrate the Sacrifice that gave us Life – that continues to give us Life – that will never stop giving us Life. For He was, He is, and He will always be the Savior of the World.

And that is why, no matter what else is going on in the world, no matter if there is war, or famine or disease ... the Resurrection of our Lord on that first Easter Sunday will always be front page news.

He is Risen!

He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!



NO + FEAR

What are you afraid of? God is bigger

We all have fears ... some of them rational and others, well, not so much. But fear can take hold of us and not let us go. Late in 2019, God prompted me to do a message series on Fear. And, for once, I listened. 😊 Even though I must admit I was a little fearful of where it might lead. I was ready to do it right after the First of the Year, but it wasn't the right time. Then, God let me know to do it right after Easter. I thought that was pretty weird timing, but I went with it – I'm trying to be more obedient. 😊 Then, Covid-19 hit and it all made sense to me. During this time in our world's history, it is really easy to be afraid – to let fear get the best of us and to panic. But we do need to remember that God is in control ... He is in all of this ... He is BIGGER than all of our fears.

So, for the six weeks after Easter, we will be looking at Fear and what God says about it and what He says about His role in taking away our fears.

We will be looking at how doubt relates to fear during our first message. For the four weeks following that, we will look at the four major types of fear that people have: rejection, failure, intimacy, and losing control (any of those sound familiar?) – I think many of our fears would fit into one of those categories. And, finally, to wrap up, we will talk about fear of change and the unknown.

I hope that you will join us as we move through this message series and that you, along with me, will find strength in the One who takes away all of our fears and who is always with us, no matter what we are going through.



Changes in Worship

Thanks COVID-19 (NOT)

So in late February, we started worship in Mesa with a great group of people in a wonderful worship space. We were there for all of three weeks before everything changed – not only for us, but for the entire nation – and the world at large, too. 😞 COVID-19 hit – and its impact has been devastating for many around the globe.

What that meant for us, was moving to a Facebook only format. Our worship space peeps were ahead of the curve and closed their facility until the middle of May, leaving us without a worship space. We totally agreed with their decision and look forward to starting up again when this is all over.

But that has meant some changes in how we worship. Obviously because we can't get together as a group, we have to find a way to do so over the Internet. This is made possible by the miracle of technology and Facebook. (God is good all the time, right?!)

So, we started out with our usual Facebook Live message. Then, we added Scriptures and Prayers to that

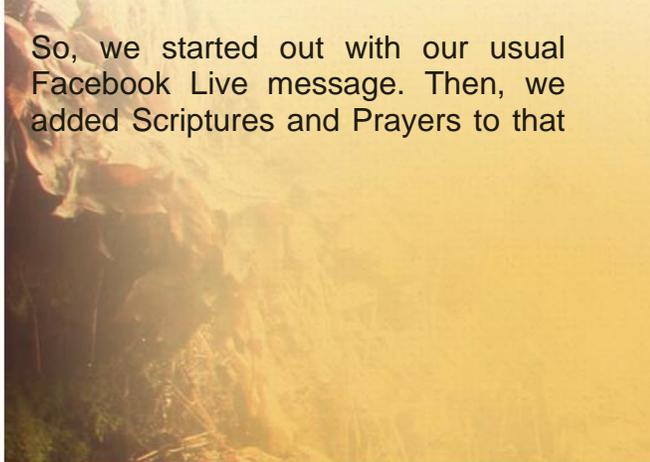
so that we had more of a worship-style feel. But that still doesn't feel like enough. We aren't able to stream music because our license doesn't allow it, but we can still do a worship service without music. I know it's not the same ... but ... So ...

Our Good Friday worship will be the complete Tenebrae service, less the one h.

Starting on Easter Sunday morning at 10:00 a.m., we will do the entire service, less music, each week. Yes ... even communion.

Unfortunately, unlike some congregations who are able to do "drive thru" (literally) communion, we are not able to do so. So for communion, please have your bread and wine/grape juice ready. I will consecrate the elements and we will commune together. I know it's not the same as being with each other, but with communion, we are all part of the same meal/banquet hosted by our Lord and Savior. We will also celebrate communion during an abbreviated service on Maundy Thursday, April 9, at 7:00 p.m.

Any other suggestions that you have that would help to keep up a more "normal" worship would be greatly and gratefully received for consideration. 😊



April Worship at GTD



Holy Week

During the month of April, we will move from Lent to Easter by completing our Journey to Jerusalem with Jesus. Then, as discussed above in a different article, we will begin a message series on Fear. We hope that you will join us via Facebook Live as we move through April.



April 5 (Palm Sunday) As we follow Jesus in his last steps to the cross, we join his followers in singing “Hosanna!” to the King of kings, the humble King who rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. During this Holy Week, our King will, by his death and resurrection, defeat our enemies—sin, death and the devil. “The King Who Comes”

April 9 (Maundy Thursday) Maundy Thursday is named for the Latin word for commandment. On this night of Holy Week, Jesus gave a new command, that we should love one another as he loves us. On Maundy Thursday, as he celebrated the Passover with his disciples, Jesus gave them—and us—the holy Supper of his body and blood, given and shed for the forgiveness of our sins. “Poured Out”
Via Facebook at 7:00 p.m.

April 10 (Good Friday) We will travel with Jesus along the “Way of Sorrows” during a Tenebrae Service.
Via Facebook at 7:00 p.m.

April 12 (Easter) On Easter morning, the Festival of the Resurrection of Our Lord, we will celebrate the good news! Jesus Christ has risen from the dead! His victory over death is our victory, and through faith in his name we have forgiveness and eternal life. Join us to worship our risen Lord and Savior! “You Will See Him”
Via Facebook at 10:00 a.m.

April 19 “What’s Doubt Got to do With Fear?”
Via Facebook at 10:00 a.m.

April 26 “Choosing to Please God ... or People?”
Via Facebook at 10:00 a.m.

Pastor Ceri’s Corner

HE IS RISEN ... WHAT NOW?

“He is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!” It has been a long journey from Ash Wednesday. One that has taken us through the time of sorrow and repentance that is Lent. Some of us have given up something for Lent – others of us have added something to our daily walk with God.

So What now? If you added something during Lent, will you continue with that new habit to honor our Lord and King? If you gave something up, will you continue in that sacrifice to honor our Lord and King? What do we do now that we have lived through another Lenten season ... Another Maundy Thursday commemorating the institution of the Lord’s Supper Another Good Friday commemorating the death of the One who conquered death? What do we do with the Resurrection now that all of this is over and we look forward to settling into the “ordinary time” of the church year? Well.... We are called to live as Resurrection people. People who joy in the Lord and all that He has done for us. We are called by Jesus to be His disciples and spread the joy that we have in His resurrection to a hurting and desperate world – one that needs Him and His salvation so very much.

Just like the women at the tomb went and shared the Good News of the Resurrection with the other disciples and they told others, so we are to tell others the Good News of Jesus. We are to go, tell, and baptize. This Good News of the Resurrection was never meant to be kept to ourselves ... we are post-Resurrection and, as Resurrection people, as followers of Jesus, as His brothers and sisters, we must not keep silent

So ... what now, brothers and sisters in Christ? What shall we do as His Resurrection people? What will you do to bring the Gospel to others? What will we do as a congregation to spread the Good News of Jesus?

As we move forward, let’s look at ways that we, even though we are small, can reach out to the community and to those who have need. ☺

Happy and Blessed Easter to you and yours from Greg and me. ☺ He is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! ☺