

What is the path to life?

Easter Sunday

April 5, 2026

What is the path to life?

Jesus showed it to us in what Christian theology has called the Paschal Mystery. It is the story of Jesus' journey through pain, suffering, and death, to resurrection life. But this story was not only a Jesus story, it is your story, and it is mine as well. Jesus laid out a path for us to follow, a profound mystery that it is found in our earthly struggle with pain and suffering, that leads inexorably to new life. Sometimes our lives are shrouded in darkness. And as we read the news around our country and across the world, there is often much darkness there also.

But as people of faith, we know that life is not only about darkness and suffering until we die. Christians are people of the resurrection. And in today's gospel we see the glory of resurrection hope. After the disciples had walked through the darkness of Jesus' agonizing torture and painful death, light dawned for them. At the tomb Mary Magdalene stood at the empty tomb in grief and anger because it appeared that someone had taken away Jesus' body. But then the resurrected Jesus was revealed to her, when he called her name, Mary. Immediately her sorrow and grief gave way to overwhelming joy.

There were many eyewitnesses to his resurrection. The first being Mary Magdalene. Jesus' resurrection life was attested to in scripture by none other than the apostle Paul himself, who wrote a letter to the church in Corinth just twenty years after the fact. In his letter Paul wrote: "Let me now remind you, dear brothers and sisters, of the Good News I preached to

you before. You welcomed it then, and you still stand firm in it.” What was this Good News that Paul continued to preach, and that the believers still welcomed and stood firm in? Paul tells us: “For I passed on to you as of first importance what I also received—that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than 500 of the brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as though to one born at the wrong time, he appeared to me also.” Although those disciples did not have an iPhone in hand to record Jesus’ death and resurrection, we have the next best thing recorded by the pen of the apostle Paul.

Paul was writing to the church in Corinth, reminding them of the good news of God that he had passed on to them, after he had received that good news himself from others. The Good News that Christ died for our sins according to the Jewish scriptures, our Old Testament. That he was buried and raised the third day according to the Jewish scriptures. Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection, that was the core of God’s Good News for humanity and all of creation. And Paul attested to the veracity of that Good News by informing the Corinthians that Peter was a witness to the risen Christ, as were the other disciples. And at one gathering of more than 500 believers, all witnessed to the risen Christ. And then lastly, Christ appeared to Paul as well.

If Paul’s story of the resurrection of Jesus had only been fake news or an AI generated hoax, than these 500 individuals would have been able to quickly debunk Paul’s outlandish claim, for many of them were still alive as Paul wrote his letter.

After Paul mentioned all the witnesses to Jesus' resurrection, he ended the list with his name. He was also a witness. But his witness was different than all the others mentioned. Paul did not see Jesus in some kind of earthly body that you could see and touch. Paul saw the risen Christ in brilliant light as he was on the road to Damascus. But Paul was not alone in his vision of Jesus. We have the stories of many saints and sages and ordinary people who have experienced the risen Christ also.

You and I cling firmly to the hope of the resurrection. It is our Good News, news that is proclaimed beautifully in our Book of Common prayer in the Commemoration of the Dead. There it says: "Through Jesus Christ our Lord; who rose victorious from the dead, and comforts us with the blessed hope of everlasting life. For to your faithful people, O Lord, life is changed, not ended; and when our mortal body lies in death, there is prepared for us a dwelling place eternal in the heavens." When Jesus of Nazareth died two thousand years ago, his life was not ended, it was changed. Colossians tells us that Jesus Christ "is...the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he himself may become first in all things."

The list of Easter Flower dedications in your bulletin remembers many loved ones who have died. But this is not just a list of remembrance, it is a list that we carry in our hearts of resurrection hope. Their lives have not ended, they was been changed. Liz and Larry's life has not ended, it has changed. Clover's life has not ended, it has changed. Bob & Jeanne's life has not ended, it has changed. As has the lives of Diane, Robert, Leslie, Jim, Gardner, Al, Joseph, Len, Na & Bill, Clifford & Ann, Isabel & Warren, John, Bea & Orville, Kate & Tom, Frank, and many, many, many, many, others. But there is much more to resurrection hope than what God offers us on the other side of death. Here's the beautiful mystery in the story. God offers

each of us life before death; a changed life as we live out our day-to-day existence. Jesus' spoke of it when he said: "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." Theologian and author Matthew Fox wrote: "A resurrection story can be distorted if it is presented exclusively as a promise of life after death and not seen for what it is: An invitation to rise daily from sadness, weariness, despair, depression, or nihilism in this lifetime. Easter is an invitation to live fully now in love, and for love." Alleluia, Christ is risen! Alleluia, we are risen!