

## “Easter: Fear Not, Run in Joy”

John 20:1-18

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***Why do we celebrate Easter?*** Easter is about the story of God’s power and love. Fredrick Buechner, writer and theologian says, “Jesus Christ is what God does, and the cross is where God did it.” Jesus died on the cross and he was completely dead. Jesus’ death on the cross is a spiritual metaphor of evil powers against God, but Jesus rose from the dead. God brought Him back to life on the third day. So we shout for joy, ***“Jesus Christ is risen, he is risen indeed!”*** The power of death and darkness seem to be strong and powerful but they cannot destroy us. Good Friday symbolizes the power of death, but the Easter story indeed witnesses the love of God is much stronger than death. The Easter story testifies that God brought life from death. This is the power of Easter and what God showed us in the morning of Jesus’ resurrection. If we believe in God’s almighty power and love in Jesus’ resurrection, we can find hope, strength and joy in the Easter miracle. Because Jesus lives, God can also change our sorrow to joy, fear to courage, and despair to hope. Therefore, Easter brings us joy and as an incredible gift of God. If we believe in *this* God, we are Easter people!



I want to show you a short video clip. This is a part of a silent film, “*Chase Scene*” directed by Buster Keaton in 1925. I really enjoy this clip. In the film, a guy has to run all his best, about two minutes and thirty seconds, because rocks are chasing after him. For this scene, the director Buster Keaton built fifteen hundred rocks and rolled them down on a mount of a forty –five degree angle steep hill on the Ridge Route in the High Sierras. The guy runs as fast as he can otherwise, he will be beaten by the rocks!

The threat of rolling rocks and a desperate man’s running image are great metaphors of our life journey. The overwhelming amount of rocks and unstoppable ongoing chasing rocks push the man to keep running, running and running with fear and in terror. Does this represent any part of your life? Match ‘rolling rocks’ with your life challenges. These could be your experiences of personal crisis, distress, or the sadness of loss. Some of us are suffering from health issues, financial problems, and broken relationships. Some of us are grieving over the loss of loved ones, seeking comfort but cannot find it. Some of us are struggling with low self-esteem or inadequate feelings about ourselves.

The feeling of despair and depression always threaten our souls and weaken our wills, and leave us helpless and hopeless. We wish to remove this heavy stone of our burden and desperately walk away from the chasing rocks, but we don't have power and strength to fight against them. Like Mary who was weeping outside the tomb in the Scripture reading, we often realize that life is not easy, but hard. It is full of stumbles, difficulties and challenges like a man in this film! Sometimes we feel that we are at a dead end, with no exit. We are weeping and crying for God's help.

The image of rolling rocks ironically overlaps the picture of the stone of Jesus' tomb. This stone was a heavy one. It could weigh 1-2 tons (2000-4000 pounds). The stone that covered Jesus' tomb is a spiritual metaphor of both the barrier keeping Jesus from resurrection, and also our life's challenges. But on the Easter morning, God removed the stone from the tomb and resurrected Jesus from death. God transforms our doubt into assurance if we have faith in Christ. This is the message of hope that we find in the story of Jesus' resurrection.



The title of this painting is “The disciples Peter and John running to the tomb on the morning of the Resurrection (1898)” A Swiss painter, Eugène Burnand (1850 –1921) wonderfully conveyed disciples' emotional feelings in this oil painting. The left is John and the right one is Peter. We know that Peter denied Jesus three times. Can you catch their urgency, hope and determination in their body gestures in their running? When Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, Jesus appeared to her

and said, “Woman, why are you weeping? Why are you crying? Don't cry. I am ascending to my father and your father!” Surprised and joyfully, Mary announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord!” Truly, What Mary saw was Jesus and she was able to find incredible joy in her heart. This joy is her strength, hope and power. Can you imagine Mary's excitement and joy when she saw the Lord? She must have shouted for joy. I found wonderful two songs expressing the joy of Mary and the disciples. As God brings Jesus back to life and Jesus became the light to brighten our darkness, we have no darkness in us, no sorrow in sight!

**I saw the light, I saw the light**  
**No more darkness, no more night**  
**Now I'm so happy, no sorrow in sight**  
 Praise the Lord, I saw the light



The Easter story invites us to re-hear the great news of God's power and love that will save us as did God for Jesus. God gently pushes us to run forward not chased by fears, anxieties and life burdens, but run in joy trusting in God. The resurrected Jesus is the reason for a new perspective and new motivation to run in joy. Indeed, Easter service is a day of celebration rejoicing God's power to resurrect Jesus and bring us joy in the midst of all life challenges. And Jesus never left us but always lives and stays in our hearts! Amen.