

GIMME GOD!

Church Service Packet

Peace

John 20:1-18

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Welcome to the Gimme God! Worship Service. We have tried to make these resources as easy to use as possible. The sermons and prayers have been formatted with plenty of space to write in between the lines. Please feel free to make changes that will be most appropriate for your church.

To print the children's bulletin for ages 3 to 6, copy pages 16 and 17 onto sheets of 8.5 x 11 paper (double-sided) and fold. To print the children's bulletin for ages 7 to 12, copy pages 18 and 19 onto sheets of 8.5 x 11 paper (double-sided) and fold. **[Important Note: When printing children's bulletins, in the "Print" dialog box, please make sure you have the "Page Scaling" option set to NONE. Do not "fit" or "shrink" to fit the printable area. Feel free to contact us if you have problems printing.]**

We welcome your feedback! Please visit our website or send an email to info@genesisroad.com and give us your suggestions, comments, and ideas.

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Sermon

In *A Wardrobe From the King*, Berit Kjos tells the story of an old man near the end of his life who wanted the perfect picture of peace to hang in his bedroom at the castle. So, he challenged two of the finest artists in the land to the contest. On the day of the revelation, people came from far and wide to watch the pictures be unveiled and see which the king would choose.

As the cover was pulled from the first painting, a hush fell over the crowd. The picture showed a mirror-smooth lake and green birch trees under the soft blush of an evening sky. Along the grassy shore, a flock of sheep grazed undisturbed. Many heads in the crowd began to bob up and down. Surely this was the winner.

Then, the cover was pulled off the second painting, and the crowd gasped in surprise. The old man blinked and stepped closer, not believing his eyes. Could this be peace?

A tumultuous waterfall cascaded down a rocky precipice; the crowd could almost feel its cold, penetrating spray. Stormy-gray clouds exploded with lightning, wind and rain. But one spindly tree clung to the rocks at the edge of the falls, with one of its branches reaching out in front of the torrential waters.

A little bird had built a nest in the elbow of that branch. Content and undisturbed in her stormy surroundings, she rested on her eggs. With her eyes closed and her beak slightly parted, she sang a cheerful song that could be heard above the noisy rush of the storm.¹

A World Turned Upside Down

This sounds a little bit like the scene the women found on that Easter morning as they went to the tomb. Matthew records the scene, describing a violent earthquake and what looked like lightning—which was really the angel of the Lord. Imagine going to visit the grave of a loved one and, upon arriving, feeling the earth shake under you. You would likely be as afraid as these women were. Yet, the wonderful thing about the story is that they went to the tomb that morning and found peace.

They had spent the Sabbath in turmoil. On Thursday night, the disciples had scattered. Only John had gone to the cross to witness the awful crucifixion of his Lord. And after they took Jesus down from the cross and buried Him, the eleven remaining disciples had spent the Sabbath behind closed and locked doors, afraid of what was going to happen next. It's difficult for us—who know the ending of the story—to really “get into their shoes” and imagine what they were feeling.

Because even though Jesus had tried to tell them several times about what would happen to Him, they didn't act like they knew what was going on at all. The only thing they knew was that Jesus—the One they had hoped for, the One they believed was the Messiah, the One they thought was going to deliver them—had, Himself, been delivered to death. All their hopes were crushed. All their dreams were dashed. And now they were afraid for their lives. John 20:19 says that even later that evening, after the women's report of the empty tomb, they were together, “with the doors locked for fear of the Jews.”

The only thing the disciples knew was that their world had been turned upside down. The One they loved had been taken away and executed. The biggest storm of their lives had burst on them unexpectedly, right over their heads. On that first Easter weekend, their emotional turmoil must have looked a lot like that second picture of peace—with its torrential downpour and stormy clouds. And as the ladies went to the tomb that morning, they certainly weren't expecting to find anything but the dead, cold body of their Master. They were headed out on a sad mission—to carry out a final act of love for the One they loved so much.

Endings Become Beginnings

But here's something marvelous we learn about our God from the Easter story: with Him, what looks like an ending is really just a beginning. What looks to us like the worst possible thing that could happen may be, from God's perspective, the best possible thing.

Think about that for a moment. When Jesus was being falsely tried and sentenced to die, which of the disciples thought, "This is perfect! Everything is going according to plan!" Zero. None of them. What they thought was the worst possible thing was really the best. What looked to them like the disastrous end of their Messiah's life was the beginning of the event that brought assurance, salvation, and life to the entire world and—Paul says—even to the beings in heavenly realms.²

This is a sobering thought—that the very thing the disciples *never* wanted to happen was the very thing that accomplished what they really needed. What they didn't plan for, hope for, or want was used by God to change history. That's incredible.

How many of you, today, are dealing with something that you don't want in your life? Something you didn't plan for? Something you didn't hope for? Some situation you'd like to get out of? Let's be very clear about this message from the Easter story—what looks like an ending to us is just a beginning to God. The women went to the tomb and, instead of finding a dead body, they found peace. They found joy.

God wants us to know today that He hasn't changed one bit. Because of who He is, we don't have to be afraid of the circumstances in our lives that look threatening to us. Instead, as disciples of Christ, we ought to prepare to be surprised by joy and peace.

This is God's message to us in Isaiah 55. At the beginning of the chapter, He is inviting everyone who is thirsty to come and drink freely. Then, He tells people who have no money to come, *buy* and eat! And, just in case you're wondering how people with no money can buy anything to eat, He goes on to say in verse 9, that "my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts are higher than your thoughts."

In other words, what looks impossible to us is absolutely no problem for God! When we're destitute and poor, God says, "You have enough to buy what you need." When we're tired and sick, God says, "You have wings like eagles. You have strength to run and not grow weary." This looks impossible to us, but that's because we forget that our God is a God who can turn gloomy places full of death into peaceful places full of life.

God's Presence is Peace

Someone once said, "Safety consists not in the absence of danger but in the presence of God." Let me say that again. Safety consists not in the *absence* of danger, but in the *presence* of God.

So what is it that you're facing today? Are you headed to a tomb, to face a "dead area" of your life? Something that is painful, something that looks like a dead-end? Remember that, with God, what looks to us like the worst possible outcome can be the very thing He can use to awaken you to a new life. Trust Him with it, whatever it is. Lay it down today and find peace. Don't anticipate the worst; don't lock yourself up behind closed doors in fear. Instead, prepare yourself to be surprised by peace and delighted by joy.

However, if switching those emotional gears seems too difficult, that's okay. John chapter 20 says that, after His resurrection, Jesus appeared to the disciples for the first time as they were gathered together behind locked doors. And if whatever you're facing has you locked up in fear, know today that God will come and find you behind those locked doors. And He will speak peace to you. He will say, "My son, My daughter, do not be afraid. I can see things in a way that you can't right now, and I want you to know that everything is going to be okay."

When the women went to the tomb, they found something they never expected in their wildest imaginations. And in God's presence, we can still find the peace they experienced on that first Easter Sunday morning so long ago.

1. Kjos, Berit. *A Wardrobe From the King*, p45-46.
2. See Colossians 1:20.

Prayers, Etc.

INVOCATION

God of beginnings, You are the giver of all life. Nothing can hold You back. Nothing can keep You down. You even turn endings into beginnings. Come now and make a new beginning in our lives. We welcome You here. Amen.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Our God turns funerals into celebrations. Our God turns dark graves into places filled with light. Come and let us bow down before the One who will begin a new and good work in us. Come now, and let us worship the Lord together.

PARTICIPATORY PRAYER *(may be spoken together with the congregation)*

Great and Gracious God, You are mighty and mighty to save. Sin and death have no power over You, the Source of all Life. As surely as You are alive today, live in us. Burn within our hearts and awaken us to Your free, abundant life. As we spend time in Your presence today, surprise us with joy and delight us with peace. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S GRACE *(may be spoken by pastor after the Participatory Prayer)*

In God's presence, there is joy, assurance, and forgiveness. No matter how good you think He is, He is always better than we can imagine. Be prepared to be surprised by His goodness, kindness, and patience. Amen.

CALL FOR THE OFFERING

By going to the cross and giving His life, Jesus opened the way for us to find salvation and redemption. As His children, we live in the light of His resurrection, with the knowledge of His beautiful character. As we behold His beauty once again, let us open our hearts and hands in gratitude for all His many gifts to us. Today's offering is for . . . *(omit if your offering is not specially designated)*

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Gracious Lord, thank You for surprising us with Your peace and joy. Thank You for blessing us with such an abundance of gifts—so much so that we have more than enough to share. Bless the gifts we have given today and use them as You see fit. Amen.

CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

God of Life, You have triumphed over the forces of sin and death. You entered our world of selfishness and injected Your everlasting love into our lives. Because of Your sacrificial gift, the grave could not contain You. The tomb could not hold the Author of Life.

God of Surprises, You turn endings into beginnings. You turn dead ends into new life. You turn sorrow into joy, mourning into dancing, and ashes into beauty. Your presence transforms fear into peace. In the darkness of our dead lives, we need Your comforting presence. In our daily tombs, we need Your vibrant life.

Bring us alive to You now as we share our deepest needs with You. *[insert the specific needs of your congregation here]*

Thank You for the promise of new life. Help us to surrender to You all of our fears and sorrows, and bring us into the joy of Your presence. Amen.

BENEDICTION

And now, may you be surprised by joy and peace. May you find the places you once expected to find death suddenly alive. May you find the graves you once expected to find full suddenly empty. To the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Children's Story

Method: Illustration

Purpose: To help children understand how God can surprise us.

Suggested Props: a blown-out, hollow egg (instructions to make this are at the end of the script)

Good morning, boys and girls. Have you ever been surprised by anything? *[Allow children time to answer if you'd like.]* I have. There are all kinds of surprises in life. Sometimes we get good surprises. And sometimes there are surprises that aren't so good.

Do you remember what happened after Jesus died on the cross? *[Allow children time to answer.]* That's right. He rose from the dead. And if you listen carefully today, you'll hear the story about when Mary and some other women went to the tomb on Sunday morning.

Do you know what they expected to find when they got there? They expected to find the body of Jesus. They were going there to say goodbye to Jesus. But do you remember what they found when they got there? *[Allow children time to answer.]* Nothing! That's right. They found nothing!

They got a huge surprise. They expected to find the body of Jesus, but Jesus wasn't in the grave. They didn't know what had happened to Him. They never imagined that He had risen from the dead. They just thought somebody must have taken His body. But it wasn't long before Jesus came and found Mary, and then she realized that He was alive!

What a shock that was for Mary! She was expecting to find sorrow and sadness, but she was surprised by joy.

Boys and girls, this teaches us something very important about God. When we put our lives in His hands, sometimes we are going to get surprised. And we will learn that things are always as they seem. Let me illustrate this for you.

I brought something with me today. *[Hold up the hollow egg—carefully! You don't want to break it!]* Do you know what this is? *[An egg.]* And do you know what's inside? *[Allow children time to answer. Hopefully, they will say "a yoke."]* Are you sure?

[Now crack the egg shell slowly so they can see there is nothing inside.] This is just what I was saying about God. As we live our life with Him, sometimes we will think we know *exactly* what something is, but then we'll find out it's not what we thought at all. We will be expecting one thing, and then we'll get surprised by something totally different.

So today, boys and girls, I want you to know that God can surprise us anytime in any way. Even though things look bad to us, they may look very good to God. He can see things that we can't see. So remember to be looking for God's surprises in everything.

How to blow out an egg

You Will Need:

Egg

Large Sewing Needle

Large Mixing Bowl

Instructions:

The most important step in cleanly blowing out eggs is to make sure the eggs are at room temperature. Eggs taken directly from a refrigerator or cooler will be very hard to blow out.

Start by poking a hole in each end of the egg with your needle. Be sure to puncture the egg yolk with your needle. Enlarge the hole at one end with a small sharp object. The pin size hole at the other end will be large enough.

Blow gently through the small hole with the large hole facing down into a large mixing bowl. If you have never blown eggs before, be prepared for the egg to break (just in case) into the bowl and not all over you or your work area. This can and probably will happen if you are blowing several eggs.

Once you have blown the eggs clean, place them in a bowl of water to rinse them and then return them to the egg carton with the largest hole placed at the bottom. This will allow any leftovers to run into the carton.

Responsive Reading

God, You surprise us with joy.

Where we expect to find death, we find life.

You surprise us with peace.

Where we expect to find evil, we find goodness.

You surprise us with comfort.

Where we expect to find sorrow, we find gladness.

You surprise us with hope.

Where we expect to find mourning, we find dancing.

You surprise us with life.

Where we expect to find a full grave, we find an empty tomb.

Keep surprising us, Lord,

and draw us ever close to You.

Hymn

Praise Be to You

sung to the tune of *Sing Praise to God* (Mit Freuden Zart)

Praise be to You, who reigns above. You fashioned all creation.
Your power shines through in Your love, Great Author of salvation.
Your healing hand has touched my soul.
My brokenness has been made whole.
You're worthy of all glory!

What Your almighty pow'r has made, Your mercy is sustaining.
In darkest night or brightest day, we find You ever reigning.
Your kingdom will not lose its might,
For all You say and do is right.
Your love is never-ending!

In stormy seas, You are the rock. You're always right beside us.
In rain, we dance; through fire, we walk. Your blessings always guide us.
Your tender hands, which took the nails,
Will hold us fast and never fail.
For You alone are worthy!

So, as Your mercy fills my days, I cannot keep from singing.
How just and true are all Your ways, true joy and peace now bringing.
No other Friend could be so true!
I give my heart and soul to You.
Oh God, You are the greatest!

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Song Suggestions

Hymns

Life is great! so sing about it (Litherop)

Words and music by Brian Wren and Peter Cutts

Peace, perfect peace (Pax Tecum)

Words and music by Edward H. Bickersteth and George T. Caldbeck

Wonderful peace

Words and music by W.D. Cornell and W.G. Cooper

Praise Songs

My peace

Words and music by Keith Routledge

© 1980 Sovereign Music UK

Praise forevermore

Words and music by Darlene Zschech

© 2000 Hillsong Publishing

Savior of the world

Words and music by Charlie Hall

© 1999 *worshiptogether.com Music*

The wonderful cross

Words and music by Jesse Reeves, Chris Tomlin, and J.D. Walt

© 2000 *worshiptogether.com Music*

Trading my sorrows

Words and music by Darrell Evans

© 1998 Integrity's Hosanna! Music

Having peace means being still or quiet.

Circle the pictures of peaceful things below.



Wee Worship

ages 3 to 6

John 20:1-18



God Gives Us Peace

Jesus came to help us have peace.

Trace the words below.



My peace
I give
to you.

True peace can only be found in one place.

Find the correct path through the maze and write the letters you pass on the lines to find out where we can find true peace.

pass on the lines to find out where we can find true peace.





God surprises us.

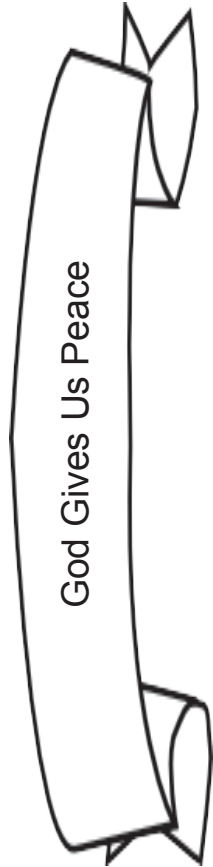
Fill in the blanks with the first letter of the picture.



iWorship

ages 7 to 12

John 20:1-18



When Jesus rose from the dead, He helped to calm the disciples' fear.

Use the musical note key to find out why they were afraid.

A B C D E F H I J K L N O R S T U W Y

Paul said God's peace passes . . .

Fill in the blanks with the word that completes the sentence. Add or subtract words and letters to find the answer.



- wear +



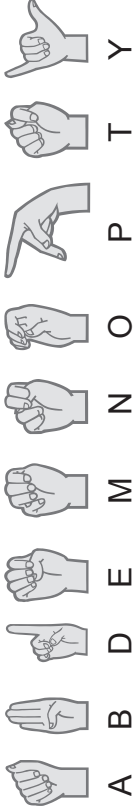
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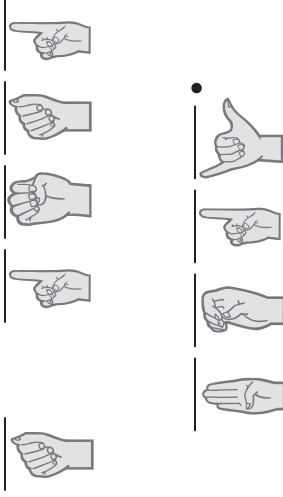
- w

God turns endings into beginnings.

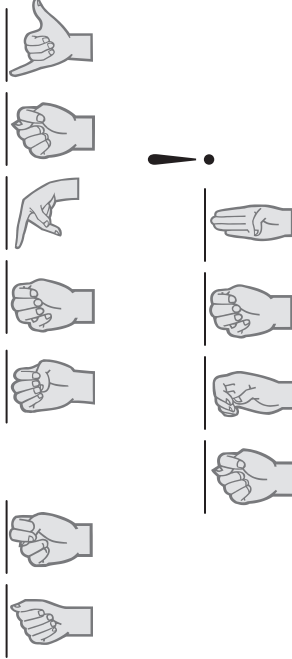
Use the sign language code to answer the questions below.



What did Mary expect to find when she went to the tomb?



What did Mary actually find when she went to the tomb?



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