

Readings for March 31, 2024

United Church of Stratford In Person and Zoom Service

Call to Worship *adapted from Psalm 118*

Leader: We give thanks to you, O God, for you are good;
Your steadfast love endures forever. Let Israel say,

**People: “God’s steadfast love endures forever!”
You are our strength and our salvation.**

Leader: There are glad songs of victory
in the tents of mercy and love:

**People: “The right hand of God does valiantly.”
We shall not die, but we shall live,
and recount your deeds, O God.**

Leader: Your way leads through suffering,
but you do not give us over forever to death.

**People: You open to us the gates of your realm
and its ways of mercy and love
that we may enter and give thanks!**

Leader: We thank you that you have answered us
and become our salvation.

**People: The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.
This is your doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.**

**All: This is the day that our God has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it!**

John 20:1-18

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in.

Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen

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wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”

When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?”

Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.”

Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher).

Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord;” and she told them that he had said these things to her.

