

April  
04.

# HE IS NOT HERE

*Matthew 28: 1-10* (nrsv)

An EASTER  
MESSAGE *by*

REV. DR. HOWARD-JOHN WESLEY

📷 | @PASTORHJW

📱📺📺 @ALFREDSTREETBC

#HEISRISEN | #PHJW | #ASBCEASTER ALFREDSTREET.ORG

Alfred  
Street  
BAPTIST CHURCH



VILLAGE  
@ASBC

MOVING FROM CROWD TO COMMUNITY

Sunday, April 04, 2021

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley

Sermon: "He is Not Here ... He is Risen" Mat. 28: 1-7 (NRSV)

## CURRICULUM GUIDE





## Sermon Summary

The darkness that accompanies anger, depression, frustration and disappointment is not necessarily the absence of the sun. In the midst of darkness, God always has something to say. One of the messages of Easter is that we must transition from the question “why did this happen to me?” to the question “what is God saying to me?” What is the Lord revealing to me about myself? What am I learning about God and how God operates in the midst of this situation? God is always behind the scenes preparing the grand finale. The resurrection of Jesus demonstrates that nothing can stop God. God does things for us that we could never do for or by ourselves. You can take God at God’s word. In every dark moment in your life ask, “What did God say?”

## Notes for Facilitators:

Welcome to Week 10. Happy Resurrection Sunday. This week the sermon summary and key points sections have been combined. Please inform your Village to look out for upcoming early registration opportunities for returning Villagers for the Fall 2021 season. After this week, we will enter our final week of this season. Please remember to be prayerful about your closing week activities. Don’t forget to reach out to the Village leadership team if you have any questions. Be sure to remind Villagers that the Curriculum Guides are always available for download from the ASBC website under the Member/ Disciple Needs >Village > Curriculum Guides tabs. Continue preparing your Village for the season's wrap-up. Please also continue to identify Village members who might be good facilitators for your Village or for a different Village in the fall. We will return to open registration and recruitment of facilitators, curriculum guide team members, and Village participants for fall 2021 starting this summer.



# Getting To Know You Questions:

1. In his opening, Pastor Wesley joked that even people who don't come to church, come to church on Easter. What memories or traditions do you have of Easter?
2. Pastor told us about a time when he took his kids to a Broadway show. What has been one of your favorite shows or performances to watch live? What made it special?





## Into The Bible Questions:

1. Matthew 28:6 says, "he is not here; for he has been raised, as he said." Have you had a moment in your life where you were expecting something to be over or you decided to take a loss, and then Jesus did something completely unexpected? What was that like for you and what did you learn?
2. Matthew 28:1 describes the day Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb as "the first day of the week." Pastor taught us that the women could not properly funeralize Jesus on Friday, the Sabbath because work ceased on the Sabbath. Maybe Jesus was inviting them to rest from their worries and labor, or maybe it is something else? What is your interpretation of this verse?
3. Pastor Wesley introduced us to the Greek word *theoreo* in Matthew 28:1, which means to "understand" rather than just to "look" . What are you seeking to understand in your life right now?

## Life Application Questions:

In this week's sermon Pastor Wesley framed darkness as the "loss of hope." What darkness is on your mind this week as we enter the second consecutive Easter season impacted the COVID-19 pandemic? What are your current practices or what practices are you hoping to adopt to deal with dark moments?



1. The sermon scripture reminds us that, "he has risen *as he said*." Can you share a promise that God has given to you? How easy or difficult has it been for you to hold on to that promise? What helps you to remember that promise?
2. At the beginning of this week's sermon, Pastor Wesley posed a tough question, "Was Jesus really who he claimed to be? And if he was, how could his story end like this?" Have you ever had moments of real doubt in your faith walk? If so, what helped or hindered you in coming around?
3. Pastor Wesley mentioned feeling a bit perplexed about how to describe a God his classmate could not see or touch, but only feel. When was the last time you felt God? How do you know when what you are feeling is God?

## "Can I Push It?"

1. In this week's sermon we learned that in biblical times women were generally disregarded as reliable witnesses. Reflecting on major current events in our time, can you give examples of instances where the witness or voices of certain communities seem to be disregarded ?

## Activity:

1. Pastor Wesley underscored the value of witnessing. Share a one-word teaser or short phrase that summarizes a story of how you have witnessed God in your life.
  - a) Work together to choose a story you'd like to hear more about. Give that Villager a few minutes to witness about their experience.

## Spirit Work:

1. Pastor Wesley closed this week's sermon with a story about a college friend. He reminded us that when we cannot see God, we know God is there because we can feel God's presence. Where and when do you feel God the most? Is it early in the morning, right before you go to sleep, or when you laugh with friends? Seek that place this week and spend some extra time there to hear from God.
2. This story hinges on a message from an angel in the midst of darkness. Think about who you can be an angel to this week. Maybe it's a stressed coworker or a discouraged friend and send them a message of encouragement or hope!

### Additional Questions for Married Couples:

1. In this week's sermon Pastor Wesley taught us that "when God works there must be a witness." As a married couple, you are now the most immediate witness for one another. What work have you seen God do in your partner's life in your time together?



2. In Matthew 28:1, “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary” go to see the tomb. Pastor explained that “see” can be better defined as not just to look, but to understand. What could you be seeking to understand more of in your partner or in your marriage?

#### **Additional Questions for Parents:**

1. Pastor Wesley taught us that Jesus did not raise himself but was raised by his father. How have you found yourself guiding your children through their own difficult moments?

2. As parents, you are probably watching everything from first steps, to first day of school, and graduations. What are you seeing God do in your child right now that most excites you to witness?

#### **Additional Questions for Young Adults:**

1. Pastor Wesley taught us about the difference between seeing a sign and having an experience. Many young adults are finding themselves at a crossroads between the faith they were taught as children and the faith they are forming for themselves. How have you experienced God for yourself in this time in of your life and what is that teaching you about God?

2. We heard Pastor Wesley talk about the structure of a Broadway show where he described the intermission as a time when God is working behind the scenes. Has there been an “intermission” period in your life and what was it like to wait while God worked behind the scenes? What was revealed when the curtains opened again?

#### **Additional Questions for Women:**

1. We learned that the Talmud says that women could not be witnesses, yet “God put the witness of the resurrection” in two women. In what ways have you broken through restrictions or barriers in your own life? How have you been able to stay focused on what God has for you, even if society's laws or rules say otherwise?

2. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were instructed not to fear and to go tell the disciples, yet Jesus appears along the way. Has God ever instructed you to speak to others? How was that experience? What did you learn from it?

#### **Additional Questions for Men:**

1. There is often an assumption that men do not need help. Pastor Wesley taught us that a more accurate reading of “he is risen” is “he has been risen,” which helps us see God’s role in the resurrection. In what ways have you needed help? What men have helped you get there? How do you do same for others?

2. Pastor Wesley gave us a Broadway show illustration. He reminded us that sometimes God has us in an intermission where God is working behind the scenes. In a society where men are expected to have all aspects of their lives together, what pressure have you felt to appear successful? What is it like for you when you know God is working behind the scenes but others can’t see it yet?



## Reading for This Week

Matthew 28: 1-7	Mark 16:1-18
Luke 24: 1-12	John 20:1-19
Matthew 28:8-15	

## Further Study, Resources, and Terms

*Theoreo*: To be a spectator, look at, behold. To view attentively, take a view of, survey.

ASBC 2021 Lenten Devotional <https://www.alfredstreet.org/lent2021/>

Fentress-Williams, Judy. Holy Imagination. Abingdon Press, 2021. page 245