

## **“Rolling Away Our Stones”**

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Easter Sunday, April 12, 2020

Please pray with me: Holy God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be pleasing and faithful unto you, for you are our rock and our salvation. Amen.

Throughout Lent, we have been on a journey through the wilderness and, now that it's Easter, we're supposed to come out. Our journey is supposed to be over. But is it? It can be hard to be joyful and full of hope, even on Easter, at a time like this. We are frightened, some of us are ill, and we are unsure. In the midst of a worldwide pandemic, how are we supposed to roll back the stones of our tombs and come out?

The people who survived the sword  
found grace in the wilderness;  
when Israel sought for rest,  
God appeared to them from far away

Officials warn that the next few weeks are going to be very hard on us all. They are concerned that more people will become sick and more will die. As someone who has had the virus, as a parent of a child with the virus, I can tell you that there are moments, especially at night, when it is scary, even terrifying. There are other moments when, whether sick or not, many of us are full of worry or grief. We might find ourselves bursting into tears at odd times throughout the day or feeling angry. These are all normal feelings and reactions at a time like this. Even on Easter Sunday. But...

I have loved you with an everlasting love.  
I have called you and you are mine.  
Therefore, I have continued my faithfulness to you.  
Again, I will build you, and you shall be built!

In the midst of our fear and doubt, it's important to remember that the first Easter was scary, too.

They thought Jesus was dead and even thought that someone had stolen his body from his tomb. Their country was controlled by ruthless rulers who crucified political opponents, who seemed impossible to stand against. Jesus' followers were terrified, they wept, and even when they saw that Jesus had been resurrected, some found it hard to believe.

Scripture tells us that what we're feeling right now is normal. And then it gives us hope. Because into that moment, into *that* horrible, horrible time, Jesus was reborn. And he is present and alive in *our* time as well.

Again, you shall take your tambourines,  
and go forth in the dance of the merrymakers.  
Again, you shall plant vineyards on the mountains of Samaria;  
the planters shall plant,  
and shall enjoy the fruit.

This is the Good News of Easter, my beloved ones! That even in the midst of death and disease, fear and uncertainty, God does not leave us. Instead, God faces those things head on and overcomes them, just as Jesus overcame evil and death.

So, on this Easter, when you might be struggling to feel joy, let your hearts remember Jesus and hope. Let your eyes see the angels glowing in the cave. Let them see Jesus, standing outside of the tomb, clothed in light. And let yourself hear Jesus call your name, as he called the name of Mary. Let him help you roll away your stones, my dear ones, and come out into the light of hope.

For Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed. Amen.