

# *Straight from the "Hart"*

April 9, 2023 – Son Rise - Easter



**Welcome** to Hartland UMC's "Straight from the "Hart"". We are glad you are participating in today's time of worship by reading this service script. Our Lenten Series is called "Journey of Stones" and is very loosely based on a book by the same title, written by Steven Molin.



## **Son Rise Worship (8:00 am)**

(10:00 am Easter Worship begins on page 8)

**Welcome** On one of the highest holy days of the Christian Season, I am glad you have chosen to come or tune in to worship with us at Harland United Methodist Church for our Son rise service. We really do appreciate it... Let's start with prayer.

**Opening Prayer** God of power and majesty, with the rising of the sun you have raised Jesus Christ and delivered him from death's destruction. We praise you on this bright day for all our gifts of new life. Lord of Life, by submitting to death, you conquered the grave. By being lifted on a cross you draw all peoples to you. By being raised from the dead, you restored to humanity all that we had lost through sin. All our praise is yours -- now -- and forever. Amen.

**Music** Let's begin our celebration of Christ's resurrection by singing

### **Up From the Grave He Arose**

Text: Robert Lowry, 1874 Music: Robert Lowry, 1874

1. Low in the grave he lay, Jesus my Savior,  
waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord!

Refrain

Up from the grave he arose;  
with a mighty triumph o'er his foes;  
he arose a victor from the dark domain,  
and he lives forever, with his saints to reign.  
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!

2. Vainly they watch his bed, Jesus my Savior,  
vainly they seal the dead, Jesus my Lord!

Refrain



3. Death cannot keep its prey, Jesus my Savior;  
 he tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord!  
 Refrain

### Bible Reading 1

If we want to experience and Easter-like resurrection in our life, Jesus gives us the example of how to live. Hear how Paul describes it.

Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

Philippians 2:1-8 (NLT)

**Theme** [Brackets are actions done while the following words are being spoken]

This is Easter, which celebrates the resurrection of Jesus. So let's talk about that. But first, What does the word "empty" mean to you? {Congregation answered 'Nothing'} That's a pretty good word. [Hold up plate] How do you feel when you see an empty plate? {Hungry, sad} I did this in one children's time, and they said "Angry!" We can get all kinds of reactions, but let's go with "empty". Same thing with a cup, if you are thirsty and you see it is empty, that makes us feel "empty". And God created us in such a way that without him our hearts are empty, and if we are paying attention, we will feel that emptiness too.

Empty is usually a sad word. But sometimes it isn't. Today is one of those days. The Bible says Father Son and Jesus created everything. [Pour water filling one of the glasses] And then Jesus emptied himself and came to earth as human -- poured himself into earth [hold up the full glass] and the earth was filled with his glory. [Act like you are going to pour the one glass into the other, but stop] Then he wanted to pour himself into us -- but (you



know how you do that with coffee? [Put hand over the top of one glass] we said “No, we want to fill our lives with other things,, and so he wasn’t able to do that – so he



had to come in a stronger way [pick up and show a battery] so Jesus walked among us lots of life and energy and power, and we didn’t like that either, so we were killed him and put him in a tomb [put the battery in the large side of the plastic bowl] and covered him up, [cover the “tomb” bowl with another bowl] And sealed it shut. [Pause, and then shake it a few

times so it can be heard]

But God really liked what Jesus did and [take away the covering bowl and show the battery again] so he opened the tomb and brought Jesus out again -- [show the tomb bowl that is now empty again] so the tomb was empty -- and brought him [put the two halves together] to new life.



The two bowls should have been halves of a plastic egg, but I couldn’t get to the stone in time, so you’ll just have to imagine that. And so now God, with all this new information we see in Jesus – [Hold up the two glasses] again offers to pour himself into us. But he still won’t force us. We could refuse. But we don’t want to do that, do we? (No.) [Pour the water from one glass to the other] We open our hearts and lives to be filled with eternal life and God’s love. So let’s be thankful that Christ emptied himself to fill the emptiness of our life, and be reminded that the empty tomb speaks volumes for the life we can have with Jesus.

**Music** And because Jesus emptied himself so that we could be full, God elevated him to the highest place of honor, so let’s join with all who bow before him and declare that Jesus is King by singing (See Philippians 1:9-11)

### **Crown Him with Many Crowns**

ext: Matthew Bridges, 1800-1894, and Godfrey Thring, 1823-1903

Music: George J. Elvey, 1816-1893

1. Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne,  
Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns all music but its own.  
Awake, my soul, and sing of him who died for thee,  
and hail him as thy matchless King through all eternity.
2. Crown him the Lord of life, who triumphed o'er the grave,

and rose victorious in the strife for those he came to save.  
 His glories now we sing, who died, and rose on high,  
 who died, eternal life to bring, and lives that death may die.

## Bible Reading 2

Before we accept the life giving grace of God, before we accept his redemption from death – Hosea tells us what life may look like. God is in his grace had held off his punishment, but instead of receiving the extra time as an opportunity to repent and change their ways to what we heard in the earlier reading, they went even further in failing to trust in the Lord and instead trusted in evil human leaders who were leading them down a bad road.



And now the northern kingdom of Israel is about to be no more – as God is finally feels forced to collect the debt of sin against them. He writes --

Now where is your king? Let him save you! Where are all the leaders of the land, the king and the officials you demanded of me? In my anger I gave you kings, and in my fury I took them away. “[Your] guilt has been collected, and his sin has been stored up for punishment. Pain has come to the people like the pain of childbirth, but they are like a child who resists being born. The moment of birth has arrived, but they stay in the womb! “Should I ransom them from the grave? Should I redeem them from death? O death, bring on your terrors! O grave, bring on your plagues! For I will not take pity on them... the east wind—a blast from the LORD— will arise in the desert. All their flowing springs will run dry, and all their wells will disappear. Every precious thing they own will be plundered and carried away. They must bear the consequences of their guilt because they rebelled against their God.

Hosea 13:10-16a (NLT)

## Sermon 1: Debt Stone: The Death of Debt

I think sometimes Easter doesn't mean as much because we don't take sin as seriously as we should sometimes. For some people, the season of Lent is like New Year's 2 point 0. A sequel, a second chance to work on something. When we think about the most popular New Year's Resolutions, some we may quickly think of (well, I certainly do) of losing weight, some may think of quitting smoking. Ben's favorite one is to give up pop. We all have favorite tasks to work on to discipline ourselves and become better people.

I just recently heard a stand up talking about it and quoted some statistic that said one of the most popular New Year's Resolutions was to be happy. He was "glad" to know that most people don't understand what goals are. You can't measure it, you can't make progress, because it is a feeling, it isn't something you can do or try to accomplish. So as the year goes on, someone may ask, "How are you doing on that?", and the answer might be – "Well, I was up to satisfied for a while, but now I've kind of settled down for almost content."

I did just come across one – not too many years back - that I didn't think was all that popular --- to get out of debt... I guess because, as I look across America, it *seems* like most Americans don't take debt very seriously. Well, I should say, we don't take our own debts to others very seriously, or the other's debts of others very seriously. But if the debt is to us, then we take that very seriously, don't we? If we owe somebody, we want to be forgiven, but if we are owed, then we want justice. Jesus even had something to say about that when he told a parable about the unforgiving servant. He owed a whole lot of money. Do you remember that story? He owed a whole lot and begged for mercy and the king forgave him, and he came out and there was somebody who owed him just a little bit, and he got really mad at that guy – he wouldn't forgive him. And then the king heard about it and called him back in and reinstated the big debt that he had and locked him up until he could repay every penny. (See Matthew 18:23-35).

Abraham Lincoln was hired once – politicians used to be lawyers, I don't know what they are nowadays – but they often used to be lawyers. Abraham Lincoln was hired to sue someone over a \$2.50 debt. I don't know what that would equate to in today's market. Lincoln didn't even want to take the case, but his client insisted. So he asked for a fee of \$10, upfront. He gave Lincoln the \$10, who then gave half to the defendant, who promptly paid his debt, and everyone went home happy.

If we commit something wrong, or it doesn't involve us, then we often don't worry about that too much. That is a legitimate argument. But when it is we who are wronged, then it is the principle of the thing, and we need to be made whole, no matter how "big or small". This is also a legitimacy to that argument too – we should be fair to each other. Hosea gets right up and personal and about how devastating it is when sin takes its effect on a person and on a nation already divided, and at this point the words are directed to the northern kingdom of Israel. You heard them read.



Sin against God and humanity caused the nation to go down the tubes. Leaders couldn't save them. God's patience and reluctance to punish them had benefited them to date; and he longs to give new birth, to restore the holy nation to its full potential; but they refuse to enter the birth canal; remaining unborn like a breech baby -- suffering the pains of a childbirth that will never happen.

Then there are some textual – issues, so that different translations may translate this section differently. Some giving a hope -- that God is saying “Well, may I will rescue them.” The one that we read put it into rhetorical questions. “Should I help them? Should I redeem them?” Except in this case, the rhetorical answer seems to be not be “Yes.” but “No.” because he goes on to say – well this is what I think these verses are trying to say: It seems like God is saying: I would (have preferred) to ransom you, I would (have preferred) to redeem you; I would have preferred to give you a new birth -- but you refused, (wouldn't let him “pour the water into them”) and I can only wait so long -- and so he summons death's sting and power to come. God warned this nation of its pending destruction years before it was obliterated. But the leaders liked their life as they lived in their little bubble of prosperity and power and instead of adapting to some new values – or old values, depending upon how you look at it – and to use modern language, I would guess they doubled down on their trajectory and filled it with promises of peace and prosperity for all, even though that was not what was coming down the road. They weren't about to change what they had. I wish we could learn something from that history. Spiritual death comes to persons and nations who refuse to be born anew.

Enter Jesus, who is now doubling down on the offer for new life – and he comes on the cross---. You know, in medieval times, the crucifix shows Jesus as a drooping, defeated, pain-drenched figure -- a symbol of defeat by the powers of evil, perhaps a reflection of how the artists felt about their medieval times, a dark and pessimistic age. Prior to those times, the crucifix was depicted with Christ with his head up, the victorious challenger against all the powers of death and evil. It is not submission to the powers of evil, it is a victorious challenge to them.

There is a sense in which both sentiments are correct. Jesus did give himself over to the powers of darkness - - suffered a vicious death as a helpless victim in his human body. Not because the powers of earth were



able to force it upon him, but because he willingly offered himself to us “still-in-the-womb” sinners.

But today we experience vindication and victory. We realize that the only person who most truly lived on this planet was also the one who died for us all. Jesus, *by his willingness to be born*, offers us new life.

Death, grave, and hell are summoned to do their worst to him, and they do their worst through the religious and political leaders. The horrendous, deathly debt of sin is satisfied in his death. That is why Paul takes those terrifying words of Hosea through which God summons death to come to the nation; and turns them on its head as a defiant taunting of death. Whereas before death was invited to come and give its sting, now Paul says: Where is your power now, grave? Where is your sting now, death? The sting of death is sin, but thanks be to God, we have been ransomed from the grave and redeemed from death. (See 1 Corinthians 15:54-58) The debt is paid -- and we are free... free to worship our deliverer... Let's pray...

**Prayer** God of eternity, you are present with us because Christ rose from the dead, and you persist in lifting us to new life in him. So we bring to you ourselves and all who are in need of spiritual resurrection through Jesus Christ. We give you thanks for all our victories over sin and evil in our lives, for those who have gone before us to your eternal home, for loyalty and love of friends and family and church family, for the renewal of nature, and for the desperately needed continuing faithful witness of the Church of Christ. We give thanks for all of these things that you made possible by your resurrection, and it is in your name that we pray. Amen.

**Music** Therefore, let's sing about his victory over our debt to sin and death.

### **Victory in Jesus**

Words: Eugene M. Bartlett, 1939 Music: Eugene M. Bartlett, 1939

1. I heard an old, old story, how a Savior came from glory,  
how he gave his life on Calvary to save a wretch like me;  
I heard about his groaning, of his precious blood atoning,  
then I repented of my sins and won the victory.

#### Refrain

Oh victory in Jesus, my Savior forever!  
He sought me and bought me with his redeeming blood;  
He loved me ere I knew him, and all my love is due him;  
He plunged me to victory beneath the cleansing flood.

2. I heard about his healing, of his cleansing power revealing,  
how he made the lame to walk again and cause the blind to see;  
And then I cried, "Dear Jesus, come and heal my broken spirit,"  
and somehow Jesus came and brought to me the victory.

Refrain

3. I heard about a mansion he has built for me in glory,  
and I heard about the streets of gold beyond the crystal sea;  
about the angels singing and the old redemption story,  
and some sweet day I'll sing up there the song of victory.

Refrain

**Blessing** And so now we pray, as many of us will be going to breakfast, that the food will be blessed to our bodies and our thanksgiving to those who got up early and prepared all that for us so that we could fellowship and feast and celebrate the resurrection together. We bask in the glory and joy of Christ's Easter victory. Because the stone was rolled away, the "stones" which have trapped us - our worries, fears, anxieties, troubles of various sorts - need not threaten us. The power that raised Christ from the dead will also raise us from glory to glory through this life and into the next. In the name of our risen Savior we pray and go. Amen.

---

CCLI # 2561297