

**Summerland United Church  
March 31 Easter Sunday  
What are you up to? Look up!**

**Stepping up to the Threshold**

Three days had passed. The women went to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body, according to custom. No doubt the journey to the tomb was heavy. Perhaps they approached with heads lowered in defeat and grief. But then they looked up and it changed their lives. The barrier that they thought would be there was gone and what they discovered instead was life. Will we look up? Will we look up from our complacency, apathy, fear and depression about "the way things are" and be filled with the promise of new life and hope yet again? Will we be part of the raising up of humanity? We can say yes to this, for Christ the Lord is Risen Today!

**The Word Uplifts:** Mark 16: 1-7, When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?"

When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you."

**Reflection: LOOK UP**

For the last six weeks we've been in the season of Lent, preparing for Easter. We are the lucky ones who know how the story plays out. We know that Good Friday is not the end of the story, but rather a new and different sort of beginning. And because we know this, sometimes I think that we forget that the followers and friends of Jesus didn't know this when they went to the tomb that first Easter morning.

The passage says:

*But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away.*

Just hold that thought for a moment. They looked up and saw. The women, courageous to approach the tomb, did so with downcast eyes. They were full of grief and sorrow. Because they were afraid and worried about reprisals for being friends of Jesus, they probably approached silently, perhaps weeping quietly, unable to vent their rage at this senseless death for fear of being arrested themselves.

But still, they went, expecting a closed and sealed tomb. And when they looked up discovered something completely different. They looked up to discover a weight had been lifted. A burden they thought they would carry for the rest of their lives removed. An opening. Sunshine filled a space that had once been in shadow.

Imagine that. Imagine the weight of such immense grief lifted. When we lose people we love, when we are faced with that intense and unrelenting anguish we can feel as though a boulder has been rolled over our chest. Over our bodies, shutting out all light, all hope. And it can feel like it will never go away. And perhaps it never really does.

I don't presume to tell anyone how to grieve. I know only for myself that there came a day eventually, that some of that weight was lifted. There came a day when I looked up and saw a little bit of light and a little bit of hope.

There came a day when I could think of the person I lost and know that somehow, in some strange and mysterious way they were still with me. They were still present and a part of my life, not as they had been, but in a new way.

And that gave them new life. It gave me new life. After we lose someone we hold dear, life is never the same. It can't be. And it shouldn't be. We are forever changed when we suffer great loss.

Yet, in this story, so integral to our faith we see that death is not the end. Rather it's new way of being human in the world. One where we recognize and honour the preciousness of life. One where we know human life is fleeting – making the time we have on this earth all the more precious. Making the time we have with those we love all the more precious.

Because we know this story, because tell it every year, it's easy to become dismissive of it. To forget the meaning in it. And not take the time to look up as the women did that first morning and see what a mystery and miracle life truly is.

**May it be so**