



## EASTER SUNRISE: AN AT HOME LITURGY

WRITTEN BY SARAH ARE

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*We invite you to implement this liturgy as-is, or adapt it for your context.  
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### ABOUT THE LITURGY

We all have our own traditions around Easter—egg hunts, family lunches, Easter lilies, and meaningful worship. This year, those traditions will not be the same,<sup>1</sup> and yet, we believe that just like every Easter before, the sun will rise, and something will be different.

This year, despite our physical distance, we invite you to carve out some sacred space in the comfort of your own home to recognize the holiness of this day.

This is a simple liturgy for your own personal Easter Sunrise service. Why sunrise? Every year, thousands of people celebrate Easter at sunrise because the women discovered the empty tomb early in the morning, "while it was still dark" (John 20:1). Therefore, we invite and challenge you to be like these brave biblical women, to rise in the dark, to recognize the wilderness, and to watch the sun rise over it.

May your morning be holy. May it be authentic. May it be joyful. May it be messy. May it be whatever it is you need on this day. For even though we cannot be near one another at this time, God always draws near to us. Even in the wilderness, God is there. Let us worship Holy God.

### SUPPLIES

- A candle
- Matches or a lighter
- Comfy clothes (*pajamas preferable*)
- A blanket (*if it's chilly*)
- Something warm to drink (*this is optional, but if you're getting up for sunrise, you deserve coffee!*)

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<sup>1</sup> This liturgy was created during Lent 2020, in the midst of the global pandemic caused by COVID-19.

## LITURGY

### OPENING | Light a Candle & Settle In

As you start your morning, head outside! Find a comfortable place to settle in and watch the sunrise. Watch from a front porch, a porch swing, a picnic table in your backyard, or a big front window if it's too cold out.

Once there, light a candle. Allow this candle lighting to be a spiritual reminder that this place is a place set apart. This is a moment set apart, for even though the sun will rise, we, like the women at the tomb, begin our journey in the dark. Allow the flame to remind you that even in the darkest times, love and light find a way.

**Tip for young families:** Invite children to play a role by either lighting the candle or deciding where you will sit. If you have multiple children, allow one child to light the candle, one to decide where it is going to be placed, and one to blow the candle out. Alternatively, you might light one stable and sturdy candle for each kid.

### POEM | "The Wilderness is the Birthplace of Joy" by Sarah Are<sup>2</sup>

*Read the following poem a few times through as a centering prayer.  
Circle words that stand out to you. Pay attention to what visuals come to mind.*

I used to know the wilderness only as pain;  
A land without food, a land without water.  
    But you rained down manna  
    And even water flows in your desert.

I used to think the wilderness was total isolation—  
    But the Israelites had each other,  
    And you had the stars in the sky.

So then I thought the wilderness must be time wasted—  
    Forty years of circles.  
    Forty years of wondering.  
    But then I realized, each step is a step,  
    And maybe there's growth in that.

So then I concluded that the wilderness must be lonely spaces—  
    The woman and her well,  
    The blind man and his gate,  
    Martha and her kitchen,  
    Peter and his fire.  
    But then you showed up in each of those places,  
    To each of those faces.

So now I wonder—  
    What if the wilderness is the birthplace of creation?  
    What if the wilderness is where call begins?  
    What if the wilderness is where joy is birthed?  
    What if, between the dirt and the sky  
    And that wide orange horizon,  
    The wilderness is where we find you?

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<sup>2</sup> This poem is one of many in our [Wilderness Poems](#) collection by Sarah Are.

## READ | John 20:1-18

Read John 20:1-18 out loud. As you read, pick out a word or phrase that stands out to you. Share that word or phrase with those around you, or jot it down in the margins of your bible.

**Tip for young families:** Sometimes it helps children to have something specific to listen for in the scripture reading. You might encourage children to listen for what happens to Mary in particular.

## REFLECT | Discussion or Journaling

Reflect on the following prompts. You can either jot these down in a journal, mull them over in your mind as the sun rises, or discuss them with family members present.

- 1) What are your Easter morning traditions? Why is this morning special to you? What feels different about this morning this year?
- 2) There are many emotions present in this story—fear, hope, grief, disbelief, awe. What emotions are you feeling today? Put words to those emotions. Share with your family or write them down.
- 3) Jesus says to Mary, “Who is it you are looking for?” What is something you are looking for in your faith journey, in your life, in your relationships, or in your own self-growth?
- 4) Mary ends her discussion with Jesus with a declaration: “I have seen the Lord.” It is a statement of faith, a statement of hope, a statement of trust. Where do you see God? Where have you seen God in years past, and where do you see God this very morning?

### **Additional questions for children:**

- 1) Why do we celebrate Easter? What is special about this day? What are some of your favorite Easter traditions?
- 2) On Easter morning, Jesus returned to his disciples, to people he loved. Who are some of the people you love? Who are the people you would like to see soon?
- 3) When Mary sees Jesus in the garden, she calls him “Teacher.” What are some good things about teachers? Who are your teachers? What do you love about them? Why is learning so good?

## PRAY | Gratitude Prayer

Easter is a day of new beginnings and new life. It is a day for hope and love that overflows. It is a day of gratitude for the days we've had and the days to come. It is a day where we remember that love is stronger than hate, and death does not have the last word. Therefore, it only seems appropriate to take a moment to practice gratitude.

Listen to the birds chirping. Take a moment to appreciate the rising sun, and as you do, write down a list of ten things you are grateful for. Allow this practice to be a prayer.

**Tip for young families:** If your children aren't yet able to write on their own, consider making a gratitude list as a family. Feel free to extend beyond 10 things and instead try to write down as many things as you can think of that you are grateful for, making sure each person in the family has an opportunity to share. Another option would be to turn this exercise into a game by going around in a circle and inviting each person to add one thing to the list. The trick is, you can't say something that has already been said!

## SENDING | Memory-Making and Passing of the Peace

**Memory Making:** This Easter Sunday is unlike any we have ever seen. We are not in the company of our church family, and yet we trust that God is still here. So take a photo of your space—of the candle, the sunrise, your journal, the people with you. Document this moment. Cherish this holy morning, for each new day is a gift.

**Passing of the Peace:** We cannot be physically close to one another in this time, but we can be relationally close. So on this Easter morning, you are invited to pass the peace with your church family and loved ones by taking a moment to text or call people and let them know you are thinking about them. Send your Easter photo, or post it on social media and tag @sanctifiedart or your church to maintain your connectional nature, even in physical distancing. You will be amazed how much a text or call can brighten someone's day.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rev. Sarah Are (she/her/hers) is the Associate Pastor for Youth and Young Adults at Preston Hollow Presbyterian Church, Dallas, Texas. She graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University with a degree in Social Work, and holds a Master of Divinity degree from Columbia Theological Seminary. Sarah loves to combine her love of all things creative with her passion for God. She believes that the Church has a responsibility to open every door to God, so that those of us who are visual, kinesthetic, or relational learners all have equal opportunity to engage God to the fullest of our abilities. Sarah feels called to live her life welcoming people into the church by using her energy and passion for beautifully scripted words, raw and relevant liturgy, and hands-on worship experiences to engage our longing for God and the need for justice in this messy world.

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*A Sanctified Art LLC is a collective of artists in ministry who create resources for worshiping communities. The Sanctified Art team works collaboratively to bring scripture and theological themes to life through film, visual art, curriculum, coloring pages, liturgy, graphic designs, and more. Their mission is to empower churches with resources to inspire creativity in worship and beyond. Driven by the connective and prophetic power of art, they believe that art helps us connect our hearts with our hands, our faith with our lives, and our mess with our God. Learn more about their work at [sanctifiedart.org](https://sanctifiedart.org).*

