



**What are you running to?**  
Easter Day, April 21st, 2019  
All Saints' Episcopal Church, Atlanta  
Rev. Dr. Simon Mainwaring

# What are you running to?



## **The Collect**

O God, who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross, and by his glorious resurrection delivered us from the power of our enemy: Grant us so to die daily to sin, that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## **The First Reading**    *Isaiah 65:17-25*

I am about to create new heavens and a new earth;  
the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.  
But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating;  
for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight.  
I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people;  
no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress.  
No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days,  
or an old person who does not live out a lifetime;



## **What are you running to?**

*Easter Day, April 21st, 2019*

*All Saints' Episcopal Church, Atlanta*

*Rev. Dr. Simon Mainwaring*

for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth,  
and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed.  
They shall build houses and inhabit them;  
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.  
They shall not build and another inhabit;  
they shall not plant and another eat;  
for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,  
and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.  
They shall not labor in vain,  
or bear children for calamity;  
for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord--  
and their descendants as well.  
Before they call I will answer,  
while they are yet speaking I will hear.  
The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,  
the lion shall eat straw like the ox;  
but the serpent-- its food shall be dust!  
They shall not hurt or destroy  
on all my holy mountain, says the Lord.

## **The New Testament Reading Acts 10:34-43**

Peter began to speak to Cornelius and the other Gentiles: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ--he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."



**What are you running to?**

*Easter Day, April 21st, 2019*

*All Saints' Episcopal Church, Atlanta*

Rev. Dr. Simon Mainwaring

## **Gospel**    *Luke 24:1-12*

On the first day of the week, at early dawn, the women who had come with Jesus from Galilee came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

---

Happy Easter everyone! It is such a delight to see you all here this morning, a glorious sight to behold and a wonderful tradition that we share with Christians around the world, as we gather here this day to proclaim that God's love conquers all - all our fears and our hurts, all our divisions and our failures to forgive - the love of God surpasses everything, and promises a new world of justice and joy as you and I are beckoned toward a life, risen in Christ. What a privilege it is for me to have the opportunity to share that good news with you today. Welcome!



I imagine that for many of you here, this Easter story, that lies right at the heart of our faith as followers of Jesus, is one that you will have heard many times. It may even be too familiar, a path too well-worn to have anything more for you to discover upon. Yet, perhaps, for others all of this is new, or at least new enough. Perhaps this story of women coming at dawn to find the stone rolled away from the mouth of a tomb, a missing body, two men in dazzling clothes, and the cryptic message that we should not *'look for the living among the dead'*, is a tale that might sound more akin to fantasy than the account of real events.

Whether it is to you overly familiar, or a little fantastical, this story remains the still point around which all Christian theology revolves, the epicenter of our faith, that claims that God is not far-off, but is close by, come as one of us in Jesus. This day of the resurrection, this feast of Easter, is when that extraordinary claim that God is with us becomes more than the babe in the manger, more than a wonder to behold as the shepherds beheld the infant in a stable in Bethlehem; today that story has made it to the other side of the life that child would live among us, from joy to healing to



**What are you running to?**  
*Easter Day, April 21st, 2019*  
*All Saints' Episcopal Church, Atlanta*  
Rev. Dr. Simon Mainwaring

hardship and suffering and death, and now to life beyond the grave.

Love conquers death. Light penetrates the darkness. Hope surpasses despair. These are the bold proclamations of the Christian faith, which is good news indeed in a world where death and hate and despair are far too constant companions for many of God's beloved people. Good news, for those who live on the other side of the profound inequalities of our global economic order. Good news, for those who press upon our borders and upon the borders of the affluent across this world, longing for a chance at a better life, freed from the fear and violence of oppression. Good news, for the unemployed and the destitute, for the lonely and the lost. Good news, because this is not merely a story about someone else cast back two millennia ago; it is a story about you, and me, and what you and I might hope to live for in this life.



**What are you running to?**  
*Easter Day, April 21st, 2019*  
*All Saints' Episcopal Church, Atlanta*  
Rev. Dr. Simon Mainwaring

The challenge, though, with this story, in both its familiarity and its strangeness, is to find a way into it that might speak to who we are today. To help us find a way in this morning, I offer an element in the story that is deceptively simple and more often than not overlooked, set as it is right at the end of the gospel reading we heard from Luke. Seemingly, it is a minor detail, yet one which offers us a sight-line straight into that empty tomb, and a question for the lives you and I might seek to step more deeply into this Easter season: why does Peter run?

On first glance, Peter may merely seem to be a transition character, helping the story to move on from the male apostles' seeming lack of interest in the possibility that Jesus may have risen from the dead. As an aside, I have always found it remarkable that these men, faced with the opportunity to be among the first witnesses to a miracle that would change the course of human history, decide that rather than give it a once over at the tomb, they are just going to stay in bed after all. As a member of the male gender of our species, I have no problem in saying that there is something true to form about that. Yet not Peter.



**What are you running to?**

*Easter Day, April 21st, 2019*

*All Saints' Episcopal Church, Atlanta*

Rev. Dr. Simon Mainwaring

Peter runs. He doesn't ask questions about the scene he is heading to, he doesn't query the women's motives, he just runs. It's more than a transition moment in the story, it's a decision of Peter's that to appreciate the fullness of, we will have to go back a little into what Peter's life had been before.

Of all of the first followers of Jesus, Peter is by far the most endearing to me, not because he becomes the rock upon which Christ builds the church, but because he is so glorious in his failures on his way to that final accolade. While the other disciples quiver within the boat as Jesus walks toward them upon the water, it is Peter who steps out and tries to walk back upon the water toward Jesus, only after a few miraculous steps to sink beneath the waves. While we hear nothing of James and John up on the mountain in response to Jesus' transfiguration, his appearing in dazzling white with Moses and Elijah, it is Peter who gets it all wrong, offering to build dwellings for these three ethereal figures, only later to recognize that God's glory cannot be contained by the work of human hands.



What are you running to?  
Easter Day, April 21st, 2019  
All Saints' Episcopal Church, Atlanta  
Rev. Dr. Simon Mainwaring

Yet, it is the final failure of Peter, which precedes his appearance in the scene we heard this morning, that is most striking of all: his denial of Jesus in the courtyard of the high priest, Caiaphas. At Jesus' arrest and supposed trial - the part of the story we recalled just two days ago on Good Friday - Peter denies his Lord three times: *'I do not know him'; 'I do not know the man'; 'I don't know what you're talking about'*. Three denials at the very hour of Jesus' greatest need; the rock, upon which God will build the church, fails. Peter runs. Not literally this time, but in every other way that he can. He runs away from his fear and his failure, and it is devastating for him.

I share this about Peter so that we might find ourselves in his story. Perhaps you come here today still stuck in a Good Friday moment in your life. Perhaps you also are running from something. Perhaps you have stories of your own life that you look back on with fear and trembling, with lament and shame? For Peter does not run alone. We are people who run. I am a person who runs. We all run at one time or another, from fracturing relationships, from our complicity in society's injustices, from the moral injuries of structural





**What are you running to?**

*Easter Day, April 21st, 2019*

*All Saints' Episcopal Church, Atlanta*

Rev. Dr. Simon Mainwaring

racism and homophobia, from the truths about ourselves that we feel unable to tell ourselves, we all run, and it is because we run that the sorrow and horror of Good Friday, of Jesus' execution upon a Roman cross, is a sadness and a pain that we might find our own sadness and pain within, not for our condemnation but for our hope. For in Jesus, the darkness is defeated. In Jesus, death does not have the final word. And so, this is more than Jesus' story, it is more than Peter's story, it is yours and it is mine, and it is one that we enter into trusting that when we find the courage to come out on the other side of the cross, we will be changed, into a living hope. In this hope, we are not left simply to keep on running from what we find hard; we are promised a new life in Christ, free from fear, free from our own needs to prove ourselves worthy to the world, free to live and love for others.

To gather here today, then, amidst all of this beauty and wonder and joy is not only a moment of gathering for our own sakes, but for the sake of the world. We gather to sign our promissory note that we will trust this Jesus deeply enough to stop ourselves next time we are running from our



**What are you running to?**

*Easter Day, April 21st, 2019*

*All Saints' Episcopal Church, Atlanta*

Rev. Dr. Simon Mainwaring

failure to love, and turn back; turn back to the world's needs and its cries for justice and mercy. We gather here not merely to receive the good news that Jesus is risen, but to carry that good news in word and deed out into the world, daring to believe that there is no division, nor contempt, nor despair too great for God's love to overcome and heal and transform, through us.

We gather here to recall for one another that Peter runs one last time, not away from but toward life, to the empty tomb, to see for himself the beginnings of the rumor of the risen Christ, of the God who conquered even death. He runs because it was all that his heart knew to do. Peter runs because he wants to start over; because he longs to reach beyond his own failure to see; because God's love had not let go of him, even when he had let go of it.



**What are you running to?**

*Easter Day, April 21st, 2019*

*All Saints' Episcopal Church, Atlanta*

Rev. Dr. Simon Mainwaring

Dear saints of this living and loving God, my prayer for you this Easter Day is that you might run toward life, and that all that you bring here today on your hearts for yourselves and for this hurting and hopeful world, might find light alongside Peter at that empty tomb, light you will share with others. Don't wait. Get up. Your light has come. The Lord is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!