

Sermon May 17, 2026; Spokane Friends Church; “Up, Out, and In”

Scripture: Isaiah 6:1-13, Luke 24: 36-53

‘Why I Wake Early’, Mary Oliver, Devotions, Penguin Books, p. 171.

The Graphic Bible – From Genesis to Revelation in Animated Maps and Charts; Lewis Browne, MacMillan Company, 1928.

Jon and I will soon be traveling through Spokane and beyond to Wyoming for our granddaughter’s graduation from high school. We’ve been looking forward to this for quite a while and are excited to see her and our family there. This is one of those times of “endings and beginnings” in Ella’s life. She’s loved high school and has excelled in scholastics, sports, friendships and more. Now she’s moving on to a full-ride scholarship at the University of Wyoming – a brand-new beginning. She’s met her roommate online – another Ella! – and is making plans for all the stuff she needs for her dorm room. She has a big life ahead of her. She is growing up. She is moving out.

Each *one* of us has a big life ahead of us. *Each* sunrise is a new beginning, just as yesterday’s sunset was the end of that day. We *always* have things to leave behind and many more to look forward to. Whether small or large, the world holds freshness and light for us with each sunrise. The Psalms proclaim, “*This* is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.” What does it hold? We have no idea. We can only wonder.

Here is a gift for you – Mary Oliver’s poem “Why I Wake Early”:

Hello, sun in my face. Hello, you who
made the morning and spread it over
the fields and into the faces of the
tulips and the nodding morning
glories, and into the windows of, even,
the miserable and the crotchety - best
preacher that ever was, dear star, that
just happens to be where you are in the
universe to keep us from ever-darkness,
to ease us with warm touching, to hold
us in the great hands of light - good
morning, good morning, good morning.
Watch, now, how I start the day in
happiness, in kindness.

And, *here* is a gift of a *different* kind. It’s taken from scripture – and from Jesus’ words to his disciples and to us, on a very *dark* day, just after his crucifixion, but a very bright morning.

Jesus Appears to the Disciples; Luke 24:36-53

³⁶ While the disciples were [gathered together, talking about Christ's death], Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

³⁷ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. ³⁸ He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet. It is I, myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

⁴⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹ And while they still did not believe it because of [their] joy and amazement, he asked them, "*Do you have anything here to eat?*" ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate it in their presence.

⁴⁴ Jesus said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: *Everything* must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

If and when you have your Bible with you, take the Five Books of the Law; Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy in your hands and press them together. Then add the thickness of the Psalms, and then all the Books of the Prophets – seventeen books from Isaiah to Malachi – to understand the breadth of what Jesus meant about ALL that was written about him.

⁴⁵ Then Jesus *opened their minds* so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ *You* are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

⁵⁰ When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany (it took about 40 minutes to walk there) he lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹ While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. [A cloud hid him from their sight. Acts 1:9] ⁵² Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. ⁵³ And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

As Lewis Benson writes in 'The Graphic Bible' – a mapping of the New Testament - "*[The crucifixion] was not the end of Jesus; in a profound way it was rather the beginning.* The Bible tells us how after three days Jesus arose again from the dead, and his resurrected body was seen in one place after another by certain of those who had followed him on earth. During forty days these various appearances occurred in Jerusalem and in Galilee, and at the end of that time Jesus ascended into heaven with the solemn promise that soon he would return once more to the earth."

Liturgical churches who attend to such things are celebrating this day as Ascension Sunday. They mark the journey of God and Jesus' life, on the calendar of *our* lives, by celebrating events in scripture. The significance of Jesus rising – *again* at his Ascension – is that he did not rise from the dead to die again years later. We will not find a headstone for Jesus Christ in any burial place in Palestine. Jesus rose again and made way for the Holy Spirit to come... a new beginning. Beginnings and endings are what life is all about.

Before his arrest, Jesus had told his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it *is for your good* that I am going away. *Unless* I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you... *Remember? Jesus had told them that he would send them what God had promised... This was it!* ¹³ When he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴ He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. ¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine. *That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.*" John 16:7-15

The disciples were down and out – at their end. But instead, they were just at the beginning. They were downhearted, and miserable. But God intended them to be uplifted – literally. The Lord Jesus rose to heaven in a cloud. We know and sense this in *our* lives – not necessarily as a marked day on the calendar, but each day with the dying day and the rising sun. As sure as the sun rises, so God in Christ through the power and presence of God's holy spirit, moves in us and lifts us to newness. God did not create us for darkness. God birthed us into light. Think of it! Humankind was created *not* on the First Day into darkness, but on the Sixth Day into land, water, sea, sky, plants and animals, and darkness turning *into* light! God saw all that was made, and it was very good. And there was evening. And there was – morning!

Christ and the Holy Spirit: The Earliest Quaker View by JOHN H. CURTIS

<https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1969&context=qrt>

Quakers are morning people! We are those who do not *deny* darkness, but we choose to look for the Light. John H. Curtis writes 'George Fox, founder of the Quakers, interpreted the ascension of Jesus primarily as a *spiritual reality* rather than just a physical event, emphasizing that the same Christ who descended also *ascended to fill all things and dwell within.*' Friend Caroline Fox once sat in Meeting for Worship feeling despondent, when Christ's Spirit spoke to her, saying 'Live up to the Light thou hast, and more will be granted Thee.' What a strong message of affirmation! *You* have God's Light, God's Presence within you. *You do!* And, you can trust that Presence, God's Spirit, to guide, encourage, fill, dwell, remain, in you always.

We have Light within us... the Spirit of Christ was a promise given to the disciples long ago, and we as Friends claim it. God's Light is inherent in all people.* We rely on it. We wait to be filled with it, and to be lifted up in it. We begin again, and again, and again. Each day, and sometimes, in the midst of darkness, we find the Light of God's presence as real as Isaiah did that day filling the temple. His king, Uzziah, was dead, but God sat on the throne. An ending, but a beginning all at once. Christ crucified, dead and buried, resurrected, and now, ascended, with us in Spirit.

Make a list of all the good things you've been given this past week; *least* things like a smile, or a phone call, *big* things like a job offer, or a first kiss. Think of all the tough things that have happened since last Sunday; the death of a friend, an effort that failed, your car in the shop. Now measure those things in the Light of God's knowing. God *knows* you. God *loves* you. God is *carrying* you. God is *in* you, waiting for you to sense God's presence. God is so *happy* for you! God *grieves* with you. God's Light is with you – with us all – and will not go out. In God, there is no darkness at all.

God moves over the miserable and crochety, even the fields and faces of the tulips, who once *could* have been given up for dead in their crackly brown bulbs. But no, God's intention is *always* light, is *always* love, is *always* rising. Let us remember that we are held – the world is held, despite the darkness – in the great hands of Light.

Good morning, good morning, good morning.



*Spokane Friends Church statement of faith

Isaiah 6:1-13 New International Version

Isaiah's Commission

6 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."