

Rev. Janet R. Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
Easter Sunday
April 5, 2026
Scripture: John 20:1-18
Sermon: Who Are You Looking For?

This Easter Sunday morning the question, “Who are you looking for?” From our scripture lesson today challenges us to move beyond seeking a dead prophet or mere comfort, and instead we encounter the living Christ at the empty tomb. He is not found among the dead, but in the power of the resurrection, transforming lives and calling us to hope, service and new life.

Mary Magdalene came to the tomb looking for a body to mourn, representing our own tendencies to look for Jesus among the dead in past memories, traditions or just comfort rather than a life changing power. Sometimes it is easier to doubt than to celebrate and believe.

The angels and the empty tomb declare that Jesus is not there; he is risen. The resurrection means that Christ accomplished everything he set out to do on Good Friday, proving death does not have the final word.

Jesus asks “Who are you looking for?” to invite a personal, intimate encounter, as he did by calling Mary by name. It moves faith from a theoretical concept to a relational reality of hope and new life.

We are urged to stop looking for Jesus who just makes us feel good, and instead follow Jesus whose love, power, and divinity are too immense to be contained by a tomb.

Trusting in the risen Jesus means having the faith to believe the tomb is empty and live our lives in a way that testifies to that fact.

Who are you looking for this Easter Resurrection Sunday of 2026? Are you looking for Jesus to fix your problems? Are you looking for Jesus to walk with you during this journey of life no matter what happens? Are you looking for Jesus to transform your life?

Notice what happens after the disciple's race to the tomb to verify that the tomb was empty. They leave and Mary is still there at the empty tomb. She is the only witness of the two angels at the tomb. Maybe Mary is remembering what Jesus taught about the Resurrection and wondered if it was true. Mary may have had a glimmer of hope. Mary had faith in the midst of the empty tomb. Who was Mary looking for? Jesus of course. He was hanging on the cross just a few days ago and that morning had walked out of the tomb. The stone was rolled away not so Jesus could get out but so we could all see inside that he did what he said he would do. Leave it empty because of the power of the resurrection. He did what he promised he would do. The tomb is empty, and he is still alive today.

Trusting in Christ means having a faith that the tomb is empty, and you are willing to live your life in such a way that testifies to that in where you spend your time and how you share your resources and the places in which you exercise your influence.

If we really believe in the resurrection of Jesus and the tomb is empty then we should live by faith and not by fear. Live by hope and not despair. If we don't choose hope, then we are trying to put the stone back on the tomb.

If you leave this place of worship this morning and Jesus is still just a great man to you or another prophet and Jesus is still dead for you, then you are missing the point of Easter morning and the empty tomb.

If you believe that Jesus is alive and can change your life forever and is a God of new beginnings, then tomorrow should be different for you because of hope and an empty tomb.

The stone is rolled away, and the tomb is empty. Do you believe he is calling your name just like he called to "Mary"? Mary thought he was the gardener, but it was her risen Savior. Jesus knows you and loves you and wants you to believe in the power of the resurrection and have hope for eternal life and believe your sins are forgiven. Jesus really did die on the cross for us and he did suffer and bleed for us—for our sins. It was Friday but Sunday was coming!

Jesus told his disciples that on the third day he would rise again from the dead— the tomb was empty on the third day.

The Risen Lord is not in the tomb; he is alive and is going ahead of you into your Galilee—the places of daily life, ministry and service.

Who are you looking for? Turn to Jesus and he will give you the peace you have been searching for in life.

Come to the Lord's Table this morning knowing Jesus died for you and three days later the tomb was empty because he loves you. Jesus fulfilled his promise and is alive. Come and celebrate life with your Lord and Savior by realizing the depth of his love for us all.