



Easter

Nothing between Us

April 1, 2018

Scripture: Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; John 20:1-18

Focus statement: Like Mary, we are so used to having something in between me and you that when the stone is rolled away, our expectations keep us from seeing the risen Christ. In his death and resurrection, Jesus has become the *between* so that there are no more *betweens*. This *nothing between* is for all!

Summary statement for bulletin: God's promise and God's love have broken the barriers; there is nothing between us!

Song suggestions

HWB 46 I Sing the Mighty Power of God

HWB 50 Praise the Lord, Sing Hallelujah

HWB 276 This Joyful Eastertide

HWB 280 Christ the Lord Is Risen Today

STJ 14 Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song

STS 88 That Easter Morn, at Break of Day

STS 89 Christ Is Alive

God's Love Is for Everybody by Bryan Moyer Suderman

I Will Bless You by Bryan Moyer Suderman

Between Me & You theme song

Between me and you, the temple curtain is torn now in two, stone rolled away, no barrier in view.

I choose to be there with you,

I will be right there with you,

I choose to be here with you.

Call to worship

Leader: To all who weep, and to all who smile, whether with joy or sorrow, welcome. Welcome home to this house of God. Welcome in the embrace of Christ. Hear and believe the good news, for he is risen!

People: **He is risen indeed!**

Leader: Praise the Lord, our Jesus lives!

People: **Yes, praise the Lord! We will worship God together.**

Confession

God of life, in you, death has no power.

Because of you, this life is not our final end.

Thank you.

It feels good to celebrate new life, yours and ours.

It's spring.

We long to throw off the heavy blankets of winter and bask in the sun.

We confess that, just as some folks would like to skip winter,

there are times when we want to skip the whole crucifixion story and jump straight to the resurrection.

And yet there are other times when death feels more real than life.

When we see an empty tomb, it is easy to despair, and it seems futile to hope.

We hear stories of people who claim to have seen you alive; we want to believe, but struggle.

Forgive us for not recognizing you, for doubting our fellow believers, and for trying to hold you back.



Words of assurance

The Lord is my strength and my might;
he has become my salvation.

Between Me & You enactment (children's feature)

Supplies: many scarves

Action and noticing

- Give children scarves and have them hold the scarves up in front of them so that their views are obscured. Notice that, once again, something has come in between you and me.
- Ask: How well can you see? What's in the way of you seeing one another clearly? Would you like to remove the barrier?
- Experiment with different ways of removing the barriers—dropping scarves to the ground, tossing them in the air in celebration, helping one another remove the barriers, or even tearing a piece of cloth just as the temple curtain was torn.

Wondering

- There are so many things that can get in between us and God. On Good Friday, Jesus' death made it seem as if there was a very big barrier between us and God. But today, on Easter Sunday, we celebrate that the stone was rolled away from the tomb and Jesus was raised from the dead. Jesus' resurrection from the dead means that there is no longer anything that needs to come in between us and God.
- At Easter we celebrate that there is new life—new possibility! God's promises and God's love are *so* big, *so* long, *so* surprising, *so* full of new possibilities—and these promises are for everyone! It's *good news*!

Responding through song: "For Me, For You"

Note: Invite the children to toss their scarves in the air in celebration as the refrain is sung.

God's promises are for me, for you, a call to life that's new!
God's love is for me, for you, a call to life that's new!

Sermon seeds

Between

None! Jesus becomes the between, making anything between us and God disappear.

- In Acts, the expansive and inclusive covenants made in the Old Testament are now more fully understood through the lens of Jesus. Peter tells us that God shows no partiality and that every nation is included in God's promises.
- In John, all the expected *betweens* of the stone and death are not there, and Mary is confused. She doesn't even recognize Jesus standing right in front of her and thinks he is the gardener. It is in the voice of Jesus speaking Mary's name that she finally recognizes him. We are so used to what comes in between that we fail to recognize the living Christ right in front of us. How often is Jesus Christ before us and with us, and yet we don't see him? Do we have ears to hear his voice?
- Witnessing comes before testifying. Mary Magdalene witnesses Jesus' resurrection and is sent to go and tell the others, "I have seen the Lord." What have we witnessed of God's work through Jesus? How are we being invited to go and tell the good news to others, to testify to what we have seen and heard of the risen Christ today?

Benediction

You may choose to speak this benediction to one another by echoing: after the leader reads each line, the congregation repeats it.

We are people of God.
We go in God's love
to extend God's love
and live God's promise.