

Welcome! I know why you are here today. You came looking for Jesus, who was crucified on Friday. I have good news for you; great news, actually: “JESUS’ BODY IS NOT HERE, FOR HE HAS BEEN RAISED, AS HE HAS SAID.” So my job today is to remind you that Jesus is in heaven, and to help you in **locating heaven**.

I know that you know Christ Jesus has been raised from the dead, which is, actually, the greatest event that has ever occurred. We at this church know about Christ Jesus being alive again, too; that’s why we are named “Church of the Resurrection.” But you came, and I AM VERY GLAD YOU DID. It’s important to us to share the story.

We gather here—in the empty tomb—often, to remind ourselves that Christ Jesus is not in the tomb. We even give tours to show you the place where he was laid. We put lovely flowers right there, and make beautiful music in honor of Christ our King. If you stay a bit longer, you’ll hear some more of this music, and even get to song some, as well.

If only more people came: 400! That’s my goal; OK, 500! Because, to tell you something really, really hard to believe, Christ Jesus shows up here. A LOT, in person. Not just in Spirit, but in person! Which is actually quite confusing to me, because I thought he was supposed to be in heaven. You know, up there somewhere, sitting at the right hand of God, listening to all those dead people who he judged good enough sing endless praises to him.

I shouldn’t be too surprised, though, that Christ Jesus shows up here. One of my spin cycle instructors, Merl, made a playlist called “Locating Heaven.” Merl told us ahead of time that this was coming. What I learned from Merl is that there is a whole world of Jesus music out there I’ve never even heard of. (Don’t make faces, you choristers in the red robes; this is GOOD music. I was surprised about that, too.)

I thought someone would complain about cycling to Jesus music, but all 12 of us thanked Merl for the great playlist as we dragged ourselves from the room. There was not one complaint, even from the Muslim who declared Jesus “a great prophet, may he rest in Peace.” Of course, I knew that Christ Jesus wasn’t resting.



I didn't say so, though, because I was puzzled about one of the songs, "[Heaven is a place on Earth](#)" a 1987 number sung by Belinda Carlisle. "Is heaven really a place on earth?" I wondered. That would explain where Jesus is, could help in locating Jesus.

But "No!" Heaven can't be a place on earth, at least not yet. Not, anyway, if you mean **INSTEAD OF** that other place that Christ Jesus said he was going to prepare for us.

But I'm getting ahead of the story. In today's gospel lesson, today's Easter Sunday gospel according to Matthew, Christ Jesus was barely "up from the grave he arose." Yes, though "low in the grave he lay," Jesus Christ was barely risen. He had awhile to appear to and then disappear from the remaining eleven original disciples before ascending physically into heaven and leaving them and us to wonder exactly where this heaven is that he went to, where we hope to join him someday.

Of course, Matthew's version of the Last Supper suggests that heaven is in Galilee. HE said (26:32) that Jesus told his disciples, "After I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." This matches our lesson today, where the risen Christ told the two Marys to tell the disciples to go to Galilee and he would meet him there.



So what's in Galilee? Is Galilee heaven? Hardly! Galilee WAS the disciples' home. Was Jesus was saying, "Go home and I'll be with you in your ordinary lives back in Galilee?"

This is like saying today, "I'll be with you at Easter dinner today, whether you will be part of a grand celebration with family and friends, or by yourself with a tray alone in front of the television. This is like saying, I'll be with you on your 10-mile run today, or your 10-foot shuffle with your walker. Either way, I'll be with you.

Whoa—maybe Merl was right. Maybe heaven IS a place on earth, a state of mind, a life in the here and now in which we embody and "channel" the risen Christ. Go figure!

But heaven is the place where Christ Jesus is. And isn't Christ Jesus with us here in our ordinary lives? Then YES, this is heaven! Will we be with Christ Jesus somewhere else forever after we die? Then YES, that too is heaven!

This day, Easter Sunday, is when Christ Jesus conquered death and therefore made possible our being with him forever in heaven. Easter Sunday is when the tomb was empty, the day when Jesus returned to life from death, the day when eternal life broke into our very ordinary everyday existence. So heaven is also a place on earth—not where our physical lover is (as the song suggests) but where we are

at one with God and where we, throughout our lives, can expect this relationship to continue even after our death.

I'll tell you where I've seen Christ Jesus here at Resurrection, so you'll know where to look for him here, so that you will know where heaven is here on premises as you continue your tour:

- **Heaven is here at this altar,**
where we receive Christ Jesus and, in remembrance of him (as he commanded) take him into our very being to order and animate our lives.
- **Heaven is throughout our building and in our food pantry,**
where we tell others about Christ Jesus by giving him away, by giving our lives and food and our other resources away for him to people who need things and can't afford them.
- **Heaven is meeting Christ Jesus in everyone who comes here,**
and saying, "Ah, there you are—they said you were dead but I see you are not. Thank you for showing up in our life."
- **Heaven is what awaits us, at the end of our physical lives,** in that other place, wherever that is. I'm not afraid, I "fear not," because I know that you, Christ Jesus, are there also.

Maybe locating heaven isn't what you expected in an Easter sermon today. If so, don't blame me; blame Merl!

Alleluia, Christ is risen.

The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.