

or fall based on how persuasive these eyewitnesses would be for all—including us today—who have not seen. Jesus had six weeks in which to establish his identity for all time.

That Jesus succeeded in changing a snuffling band of unreliable followers into fearless evangelists, that eleven men who had deserted him at death now went to martyrs' graves avowing their faith in a resurrected Christ, that these few witnesses managed to set loose a force that would overcome violent opposition first in Jerusalem and then in Rome—this remarkable sequence of transformation offers the most convincing evidence for the Resurrection. What else explains the whip-lash change in men known for their cowardice and instability?

—Philip Yancey in *The Jesus I Never Knew* (1995)

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### **“I Know That My Redeemer Lives”**

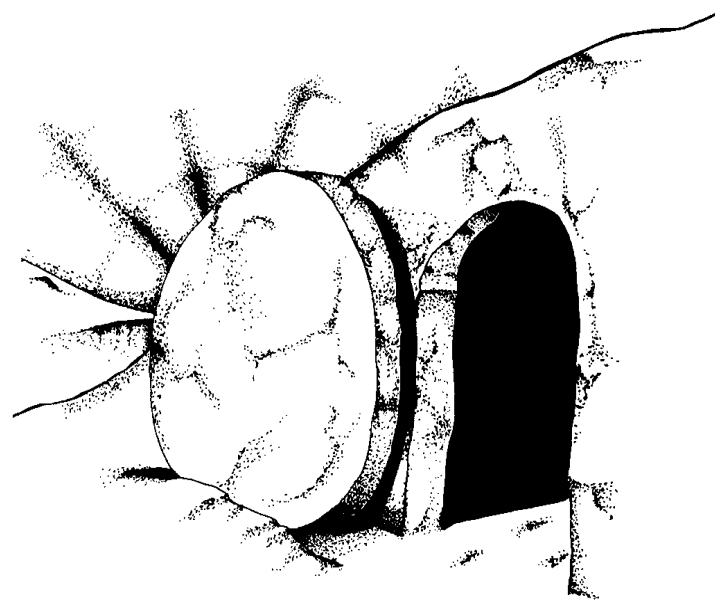
Samuel Medley (1738-99)

1. I know that my Redeemer lives; What comfort this sweet sentence gives!  
He lives, He lives, who once was dead; He lives, my ever-living Head.
  2. He lives triumphant from the grave, He lives eternally to save,  
He lives exalted, throned above; He lives to rule his church in love.
  3. **Choir Alone:**  
He lives to grant me rich supply; He lives to guide me with His eye;  
He lives to comfort me when faint; He lives to hear my soul's complaint.
  4. He lives to silence all my fears; He lives to wipe away my tears;  
He lives to calm my troubled heart; He lives all blessings to impart.
  5. **Women Alone:**  
He lives to bless me with His love; He lives to plead for me above;  
He lives my hungry soul to feed; He lives to help in time of need.
  6. **Men Alone:**  
He lives, my kind, wise, heavenly Friend; He lives and loves me to the end;  
He lives, and while He lives, I'll sing; He lives, my Prophet, Priest, and King.
  7. He lives and grants me daily breath; He lives, and I shall conquer death:  
He lives my mansion to prepare; He lives to bring me safely there.
  8. He lives, all glory to His name! He lives, my Savior, still the same;  
What joy this blest assurance gives: I know that my Redeemer lives!
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# **Old Orchard Church**

## **Second Sunday of Easter**

**April 7, 2013 ♦ 10:15-11:50 a.m.**

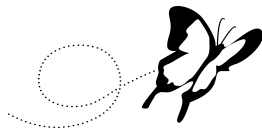


**Peter stood up among the believers and said....“It is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.”**

**—Acts 1:21-22—**

# Celebrating the Immortal Jesus as the Resurrection Community of Joy and Hope

You descended to the grave,  
Immortal One,  
Yet you crushed hell's power  
and rose a conqueror, O Christ, God!  
You spoke a word of light  
to the myrrh-bearing women,  
"Rejoice!" and upon the apostles, Peace!"  
and to the fallen you bring resurrection!  
—Ancient Christian Chant



## Scripture Readings

**Old Testament Lesson:** Isaiah 25:6-9

**Gospel Reading:** John 20:1-18

## Today's Sermon

"The Great Motive-Power of Resurrection Hope"

Romans 5:1-15; 8:18-25

*Ron Lutjens, Senior Pastor, preaching*

We celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly—and in a circle, at the end of worship. A word of direction is given, and with this everyone stands and moves to the walls. The cup is passed in two forms: in a chalice and then in small individual cups. You are free to choose.

And as this is the Supper of the Lord Christ, please listen to the instructions we give as to what qualifies a visitor to participate. **But whether you intend to take communion or not, please join us in the circle.**

## Witnesses to the Stupendous

We who read the Gospels from the other side of Easter, who have the day printed on our calendars, forget how *hard* it was for the disciples to believe....Convincing these skeptics would require intimate, personal encounters with the one who had been their Master for three years, and over the next six weeks Jesus provided exactly that.

Author Frederick Buechner is struck by the unglamorous quality of Jesus' appearances after resurrection Sunday. There were no angels in the sky singing choruses, no kings from afar bearing gifts. Jesus showed up in the most ordinary circumstances: a private dinner, two men walking along a road, a woman weeping in a garden, some fishermen working a lake.

I see in the appearances a whimsical quality, as if Jesus is enjoying the bird-like freedom of his resurrection body. Luke, for example, gives a touching account of Jesus' sudden arrival alongside two forlorn followers on a road to Emmaus. They know about the women's discovery of the empty tomb, and Peter's eyewitness confirmation. But who can believe such rumors? Is not death by definition irreversible...?

A short time later, at mealtime, the stranger makes a riveting gesture, breaking bread, and a link snaps into place. It is Jesus who has been walking beside them and now sits at their table! Most strangely, the instant they recognize their guest, he disappears....

Life continues in that vein for nearly six weeks: Jesus is there, then he's gone. The appearances are not spectral, but flesh-and-blood encounters. Jesus can always prove his identity—no other living person bears the scars of crucifixion—yet often the disciples fail to recognize him right away. Painstakingly, he condescends to meet the level of their skepticism....

Reading the accounts of execution and resurrection back-to-back, I have sometimes wondered why Jesus did not make even more appearances. Why limit visitations to his friends? Why not reappear on Pilate's porch or before the Sanhedrin, this time with a withering blast against those who had condemned him? Perhaps a clue to strategy can be found in his words to Thomas, on the day Thomas's skepticism melted away forever. **"Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."** (John 20:29)

In the six-week interlude between Resurrection and Ascension, Jesus....made his identity so obvious that no disciple could ever deny him again (and none did). In a word, Jesus overwhelmed the witnesses' faith: anyone who saw the resurrected Jesus lost the freedom of choice to believe or disbelieve. Jesus was now irrefutable....

**"Because you have seen me, you have believed,"** said Jesus. These privileged few could hardly disbelieve. But what about the others? Very soon, as Jesus well knew, his personal appearances would come to a halt, leaving only "those who have not seen." The church would stand