

Easter 2020 Sunrise Service

Choose one person to be the Leader, or, if you are alone, you can just read the Leader's part. Make sure everyone says the part of the people!

Leader: As the sun rises over the horizon, we begin where the early church began, with the joyous cry, "Christ is risen!" And the response of the people is the equally triumphant:

People: "He is risen indeed!"

Unison Prayer

O Risen Lord Jesus, we welcome you into life again this Easter morning, as if freshly awakened from the tomb. And we welcome you into our lives again, as we are newly re-awakened to life in God through you. We lift our voices up to shout the good news: you are alive! We lift our hearts up to you: we love you! We lift our lives up to you: we are yours, you have won us for God and for life forever! Fill us with your living presence; help us to see you with the eyes of faith. Share this moment with us, O Risen Jesus, this wonderful moment in the midst of life when we come together in hope no matter what we face. "It is finished" you cried from the cross, but it sure wasn't over! And thanks be to God for that! We welcome you, risen Jesus, into our midst. Amen

Easter Morning Message from Allan (someone can read this out, or you can just read it silently yourself at some point in the day)

I want to tell you a story of something that I believe the risen Jesus did for me.

It was 2012, summer, and I was on vacation at our family cottage on a lake about 130 miles north-east of Toronto. I was in the car and driving back from doing grocery shopping in Haliburton, the nearest town, when news of yet another mass shooting came over the radio. It was the Colorado movie theater shooting.

I don't know what it was about that news, that shooting, but it got to me. It was just one more shooting in a long string of shootings, but I remember thinking, "O God, what are you doing? Why do you allow these horrible things to keep on happening. Don't you care? Are you even there? Am I just talking to the air? Have I wasted my life?"

Like I said, it really got to me. I was utterly downcast. In real despair.

It was just at that moment that I was driving past a part of the forest where a tornado had come through twenty years before, and you could still see the swathe of trees that had been blown over, just lying there.

And for some reason, I just blurted out, "Lord, if you exist, then send me a tornado so I know."

I realized immediately that that was a horrible idea, so I said, "No, not a tornado, a whirlwind, but small, really small, just for me and my family, and not so much as to hurt us."

And then I said, "God, I'm being ridiculous. I know you don't do that. But I need help. I'm just hanging on here. If there's anything you could give me, any sign at all, that'd really help. Yes, I know asking for a sign is bad. It's ok, I'll make it."

I pulled into the cottage driveway, the kids were there, the groceries needed to be put away, and I forgot all about it.

About two weeks later we were down at the beach. I was standing in 18 inch deep water, maybe a little less. Six feet behind me were my mom, and Kate with Adam in her lap, and 3 year old Emily. They were on the dock under a sun umbrella getting ready to swim. Towels, hats, buckets and toys were strewn on the dock.

I was holding Noah in my arms facing away from them. I was about 10 feet out from shore.

Suddenly I noticed a disturbance in the water. It was like a little swirling. Before I could say anything, that swirling increased in size enormously, and a water spout about ten feet tall rose in front of me, headed straight towards me and Noah, about as wide as my arms would be extended, and soaked me.

It continued onto the dock, where it soaked everyone there, blew off the towels and buckets, and had enough force to bend the metal stand of the huge sun umbrella until it failed and the umbrella bent and sagged into the water.

I turned in time to see the water spout dissipate just before it got to our neighbor's dock, dropping a beach hat in front of our astonished neighbors. And then it was gone.

My mom, Kate, Emily, Noah and I were all soaked by the water, and you could see a wet path crossing the dock where it had blown.

We were all like, "what was that?"

It was the most amazing thing I'd ever seen. It grew from a tiny stirring to a full blown whirlwind in seconds, soaked us, travelled 75 feet, and dissipated, all in like 15 seconds.

We've been going to the cottage since 1969, and had never seen anything like it. I called the local Environment Canada bureau, the government weather folks, and asked what they could make of it.

The meteorologist said he'd never heard of such a thing, but since there was a hill leading down from the cottage to the lake, it might have caused a wind current that could conceivably do what I said.

It wasn't until a few days later that I even remembered my conversation with God as I was driving past the same spot and realized, I got my whirlwind. It was just for me and my family, it was small, it didn't hurt us. It literally washed over us, and only us, soaked us, and disappeared. It was exactly what I'd asked for.

Now, of course, I already told you that there could be a perfectly reasonable natural explanation for it. Unlikely, but possible.

But the coincidences involved would be pretty incredible.

It's the closest I've ever come to experiencing a miracle. A pastor friend of mine told me that I should think of myself as the pastor of wind and water, and ask what that would mean.

The whole thing made me feel so connected to Jesus, the calmer of storms, the controller of the wind and the waves. I feel like I know the amazement of those first disciples when they saw the things they saw, and the wonder they must have felt.

But sometimes even I doubt: did I really say that prayer, or do I just think I did – though I know full well I did, and I know exactly why I said what I said, from the old tornado path!

And did the whirlwind really sweep over us? It started and was over in a flash. Maybe I imagined it. Yet I know that it did. I was soaked, and so was my family. The hats and towels and buckets were in the water. The sun umbrella was bent in two and had to be replaced.

On this Easter morning, I want to bear testimony to what God can do, that God still answers prayer, that miracles can happen, and that, no matter how screwed up things are in this world, God really is still here, and really does care.

I should have already known that from Jesus' resurrection, but a whirlwind helped me find my way again.

Thanks be to God, who hears our prayers through the risen Christ, and answers with wind and water.
Amen

Closing Unison Prayer: Dear God, we thank you that you hear our prayers, and we thank you that you are still living and active in our world. We pray that you might help us to experience the presence of the risen Christ as we share our breakfast with you this morning. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen