

Easter Grammar  
Mark 16:1-8

Easter: A proper noun. Borrowed from the Teutonic goddess of spring and light Eastre. In the 8<sup>th</sup> Century “Easter” transferred to the Christian festival commemorating the resurrection of Christ, reported to have occurred in a burial garden outside the city of Jerusalem, approx. 33 Common Era. The body of Jesus of Nazareth who had been executed Roman-style (crucifixion) three days earlier and placed in a cave-tomb by one Joseph of Arimathea was found to be missing when three women came to perform Jewish burial rites with aloes and myrrh. (to hide the stench of decomposition)

Easter: Proper noun. A Christian Holy Day, traditionally observed with festive services, special music, choirs, larger than normal church attendance. Secular Easter includes Easter egg hunts, Easter bunny costumes, Easter Chocolate, Easter baskets, Easter bonnets (primarily past).

Understood in multiple ways: victory over evil (see Eastern Orthodoxy; satisfaction of a debt, (see Roman Catholicism), vicarious satisfaction moral penalty,(see John Calvin), also a sacrifice of a lamb, (see history in Judaism) ransom of a slave, a shepherd’s life given for a sheep,

Easter: Proper noun. Theological summary: mystery through which the crucified and risen Christ sets people right with God. Various called “salvation”, “redemption”, “being set free”, “eternal life”, “Peace.”

Easter: Proclamation. Christ is Risen. **Christ is Risen indeed!**

There it is: what you’ve come to hear on Easter. Christians across the world celebrate an event, mystery, metaphor—The truth of Easter is that Christ is alive!

Alleluia! **Alleluia!**

But... but...if we're satisfied with Easter being a noun, an event, even the most momentous one, we're onlookers, Staring into an empty tomb, mouths agape. Or... running away from it in fear.

Easter offers its fullness when we experience it as a verb. An action word. "To Easter"

I hear the groans from the English teachers and grammarians.

I shall defend my verbifying by referencing a bona fide poet and priest, Gerard Manley Hopkins Let him "Christ" easter in us, to be a dayspring to the dimness of us, be a crimson-crested east! In other words, let Christ transform us from the inside out bringing light to our dark places, even to our grief, like the rising sun brings crimson hues to the Eastern sky at dawn". 20<sup>th</sup> Century theologian Frederick Buechner borrowed from him. I am in good company.

Easter the noun, a resurrection is a 2000-year-old event, a lovely and powerful and even miraculous event. As a verb, it changes lives, sets a course for history, gives a direction to any willing heart.

Easter. Verb. Passive Voice. Singular or Plural

Singular: I have been eastered! I am being eastered. Christ Easters in me!

Easter is personal, yes, but Easter is communal—God comes to communities, not just to individuals.

So...

Because Jesus was raised, He easters us.

We are eastered when we open ourselves to the sunrise of a new day.

We are eastered when we are freed from the burden of worrying about how imperfect or sinful we are, and believe that we are truly and fully forgiven;

We are eastered when we stop trying to earn God's forgiveness and love instead;

We are eastered when we make Jesus Lord (president, director, prime minister, boss, mother board) make Jesus Lord, not any other rulers or government or ideologies of this world.

We are eastered when we stop fearing our death

Are you being eastered? Has the reality of Jesus' victory over the power of sin and evil and death become part of you? Do you know how much God loves you? God, in Jesus, loves us with our mistakes, small or large sins, our wounds, our broken places, and will not reject one of us. God is not an ogre looking for opportunities to punish. God is looking for opportunities to spend today and eternity with you. This is God's eastering work on Easter, the Day, and every day beyond.

Christ is Risen. Christ is Risen Indeed.

We are Eastered. We are Eastered Indeed!

Being Eastered. Essential. But when we're in passive voice nothing is asked of us—we are only receivers. When the three women found the tomb empty, paralyzed with fear and amazement and perplexity and what all else... they weren't told kneel and worship. The unnamed figure in the white robe gave them a command. A task. A mission.

Go. Go tell the others. Go to Galilee, you will see Jesus who is raised. Go "Easter".

Easter: Verb, Active. Plural

We easter. We will easter. We will keep eastering!

How?

By going back to our Galilees – code for getting back to basics. By living the Way of the Kingdom of God. To celebrate the Easter Day event, but not to stop there! To invite God to change your heart and mind and soul but not to stop there!

...to go and easter the world. To love the world and its people. Especially its suffering people.

To be and do as Jesus did during his life.

Our Lenten Study book, “Jesus’ Last Week” reminds us that Jesus courageously and confidently critiqued systems which oppressed the commoner, religious practice which abused the poor, societal norms which permitted injustice and inequality. He cast a vision where the first would be last and the last first, where even the alien, the poor, the sinner could come to his table. He taught his disciples through parable and miracle and demonstration and sermon what could be possible. Jesus taught his followers how to live with peace, in love, with one another and with God who is in love with the Creation and its Creatures.

Jesus called it the Kingdom of God.

But his Way brought him to the source of power in government and religion where he spoke truth to that power and despite his nonviolent methods, he was silenced. Shut down. Arrested. Executed.

But he was raised. Goodness IS stronger than Evil! Resurrection!

When we easter, we, like God who raised him, are saying “yes” to his Christ’s vision, to promote The

Kingdom of God, to behave like it is already here, like Christ is President! Governor. Mayor!

Eastering is not for the faint-hearted. To be Easter in the world, to follow Christ no matter what the cost, can kill—as the Egyptian Coptic Christians whose family members were killed a week ago on Palm Sunday.

We easter when we

Stand fast to our beliefs even when they are laughed at;

Invite immigrants and migrants into our country, churches, homes;

Stand up against sexual violence and abuse of children, men and women;

Love our neighbors as ourselves and include the oddest, most peculiar, and strangest;

Welcome children and advocate for what is necessary for their wellbeing: their education, their healthcare safety in their homes and schools;

Tend to the conditions of the poor and side-lined, approach with generosity, not judgment.

Assure that they receive both food and fair treatment---and equal justice under the law.

That is what Eastering is about. That's what Jesus did before his death. That's what he entrusts to us now. And we can do it because he has given us his life, he easters in us.

Christ is Risen. Christ is Risen Indeed

We will Easter! We will Easter Indeed.

We will Easter! We will Easter Indeed!

AMEN!