

Jesus Is Risen

Grades
3-4

SURPRISE

JOHN 20:1-18

What's happening in this story?

This morning begins with confusion: Mary Magdalene arrives in the garden to find the stone moved and the tomb empty! Disciples arrive, then angels, and finally Jesus himself. Out of the confusion, hope emerges, and Mary becomes the first to proclaim the good news that Jesus has risen from the dead!

What does this story mean for kids?

The story of Easter morning ends with Mary running to tell the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!" We, too, are called to proclaim the good news. That's the mission of our church bodies—no matter how fancy the words in our mission statement, we are called to proclaim the good news. God is always at work. In this story, kids learn that death and destruction are never the last word. Grace, hope, and joy finish out the story.

Why this theme?

Many kids have already heard this story many times over the years in church and Sunday school. But help them imagine the shock—the surprise!—of Mary and the disciples when they first realized Jesus was resurrected and had defeated death! Help kids grasp that it was *way* more surprising than finding hidden Easter eggs or unwrapping a present in a box. What if Jesus, his face beaming in love for us, walked through the door *right now*? Easter is something like that!

AGE LEVEL TIP

Avoid the rabbit trails! Embrace kids' curiosity, but keep an eye on the clock. This text is rich with potential side trails from the main conversation of Jesus' presence in returning from death. Don't crush kids' natural enthusiasm, but move on when you must.



GENERAL SUPPLIES

- Markers
- Pens

LESSON SUPPLIES

- Pillowcase
- Small toys (variety)
- Easter stickers
- Glitter pens

Do some kids arrive early? Try this.

Set out a pillowcase, half filled with a variety of small toys. Invite kids to take turns trying to name a toy they can feel through the pillowcase. Are they surprised by what's inside the pillowcase?

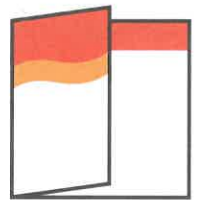
Circle up with kids for an opening conversation.

What's the biggest surprise imaginable that could have happened to you this morning? What would your reaction have been? How can surprises be confusing? Give kids a moment to talk about possible surprises in their lives. **Today's story starts with a surprise: Jesus' friends discover that his tomb is empty. Where did his body go? More surprises are in store for them. What do you think those surprises are?**

Pray together: **Dear God, thank you for the best surprise of all. Jesus is risen! Hallelujah! Amen.**

Pass out leaflets and pens.

What does it mean to be surprised? What does it take to surprise you? Do you like surprises? Ask kids to write on the leaflet about a time they were really surprised—a story they are comfortable sharing with the whole group. **Keep your story to yourself for now.**



After kids have finished writing, collect the leaflets and invite a volunteer to read them out loud. Kids guess who was surprised by what. **Is it surprising to learn what surprises other people? Today we celebrate Jesus' resurrection! It was a big surprise to his friends who went to his tomb.**

Gather kids around the screen where you'll watch the video.

Life-and-death situations can feel scary. Today we will see Mimi deal with a life-and-death situation of her own, and get a surprise.

View Episode 7, "Spring Griever," on the Year Gold Spring Grades 3–6 DVD.

Ask kids these questions about the video:

- **What are the two things upsetting Mimi in the video today?**
- **How did Gabe comfort Mimi about her flowers?**
- **What did Gabe help Mimi understand about Easter?**
- **When have you found something you thought you'd lost forever? How did that feel?**
- **What do you like about surprises? What don't you like about them?**



Open your Whirl Kids Study Bibles.

Today's passage is from the book of John. It's in the New Testament in the Gospels and Acts section of the Bible. If this is your first time reading from John, invite kids to check out the book introduction and comic on page 1270.



After Jesus died on the cross, his friends buried him in a tomb that was sealed with a big stone. But that's not the end of the story. Jesus is risen! Before Mary Magdalene becomes the first person to share that good news, there is a lot of drama, confusion, and surprise at Jesus' tomb.

Help kids find John 20:1-18 and read it in this creative way together: Tell kids to be ready to walk outside your usual meeting space as you read today's story. Move in and out of your usual space as the story moves in and out of the tomb.

Ask these questions after you read the story:

- **Who was the first person to arrive at the tomb? Who came later?**
- **What were the different reactions of Jesus' friends at his empty tomb?**
- **If you had found Jesus' empty tomb, how would you have reacted?**
- **Jesus' disciples thought he had come to be a king, and then he died. Now he was alive. I wonder what they thought would happen next.**
- **What surprises you about Easter?**

Make your mark on the Wall Chart.

Look at the chart and find the theme for today. Give kids time to find the word *Surprise*. **Mary Magdalene was surprised at the empty tomb. If she had written a story about what she saw that morning, it would probably include a lot of question marks and exclamation points.** Invite each kid to draw either an exclamation point or a question mark in and around the box by *Surprise*.



BIBLE BIT

A *tomb* is a grave site within rock, either a natural hole or one carved into rock, for the purpose of burying a body.

WATCH IT AGAIN

If you watch the video again, pay attention to Mimi's sadness. What does it tell you about how much she cared about the flowers?

OUR CHURCH

Find a place and time to plant perennials around your church to remind your group of new life found at Easter.

RESPOND 10

Open leaflets and pass out markers.

Tear off leaflet square.

1. **When Peter and the other disciple saw the empty tomb, they went home. They didn't stick around long enough to be the first to witness that Jesus had risen! Mary stayed by the tomb and wept.**
2. **The leaflet shows a maze, but it's not complete. Add to the lines inside your square to create a maze that Mary can follow from the tomb to Jesus, then to the disciples to tell them what she has seen.** Give kids time to create their mazes.
3. **How did you decide when you were finished? Did you pick an easy route or did you make it difficult? How was it difficult for Mary Magdalene and the disciples to understand what happened that day?**
4. **Throughout Jesus' life and ministry, he was saying and doing unexpected, surprising things. What surprises you most about Jesus?**
5. **I wonder why the disciples left the empty tomb, but Mary Magdalene stayed. What do you think you would have done? Why?**

LAUNCH 10

Circle up with kids for a quick review.

What did you hear today that was new for you? Take time to hear kids' responses. **There is a lot about today's story that is a mystery. The first people at the tomb were just as surprised as we are. Once Mary understood, she immediately began sharing the good news. We can share the good news of Easter too! Jesus is risen! Hallelujah!**

Return to the leaflet panels and pass out stickers, markers, and glitter pens.

Early Christians started dyeing eggs red to remember Jesus' blood shed on the cross. An empty shell also reminds us of Jesus' empty tomb. Enjoy decorating these eggs with signs and symbols of new life.

Send kids out with a blessing.

Circle up with kids. **God blesses all of us. And that means me** (place a hand on your chest). **And that means you** (place your other hand on the shoulder of the kid next to you). Each kid passes the blessing by repeating those words and actions. When the blessing makes it back to you, say, **Go and bless the world.**

Thank kids for coming today. Remind them of the Family Square on the other side of the leaflet.