

Worship Date: April 4, 2010

Worship Theme: Delight in New Life

Scripture Reference: John 20:1–18 or Luke 24:1-6

Materials: A toy Jack in the Box.

Do you enjoy surprises? I do! I have a surprise for you this morning. (Bring out the Jack in the Box toy. If you are using a commercial type, start to turn the handle and act surprised when "Jack" pops up. If you use a Jack in the Box that you have made, tell the children that this little box has a special surprise in it. Then, make a big production of opening the lid and act surprised when the toy pops up.)

When I was a child, one of my favorite toys was a Jack in the Box. I can remember sitting for hours, turning the handle, and waiting for the moment when the lid would open and Jack would pop out. Even though I should have known what was going to happen, I was always surprised to see "Jack" pop out of the box. This Jack in the Box reminds me of a story in the Bible -- a story about a very special surprise.

Early in the morning, on the first Sunday after Jesus had been crucified, two women went to the grave where Jesus had been buried. When they arrived, they found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance to the grave. The grave was empty. They were surprised to find an empty grave and wondered what had happened to the body of Jesus.

Suddenly, two men in dazzling bright clothes appeared to the two women. Now the two women were not only surprised -- they were also afraid. The men spoke to the women and said, "Why are you looking for the living among the dead? Jesus is not here, he has risen just as he told you he would."

Jesus is not here, he has risen just as he told you he would."
When the women heard these words, they remembered what Jesus had told them and they were no longer surprised at finding an empty grave. They immediately went to tell others that the grave was empty and that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Some surprises, like this Jack in the Box, make us happy, but the best reason we have to be happy this morning is that the grave is empty, Jesus is alive, and he loves us very much! That is what we celebrate today!

Dear Father, we praise you! Jesus has risen -- just as he said he would! Amen.