

I. Intro: *(walking)* **The Lord is risen!** [*the Lord is risen indeed!*]

A. Easter's finally here, folks!

1. And I know some of you are saying, "It's about time!"
2. Doesn't it seem like more than 6 and a half weeks ago that we gathered here on Ash Wednesday to remind ourselves of our own mortality and our need for God?
3. Perhaps it seems so long ago because, by holding funeral services for Helen Mann & Marg Fisher in that previous week, it felt like Lent had already started before we got to Ash Wed....
4. Or perhaps Lent felt long this year because the losses of other dear ones in our midst continued more recently with the deaths of Frances Stauffer and Gerald Yoder

B. In Lent this year, as we've focused on encountering God, our theme question has been, "*What have we witnessed ...?*" *(to pulpit)*

1. Well ... we've witnessed that we encounter God & God encounters us in our times of temptation.
2. We've witnessed God providing unexpected blessings for us when we're open to God's Plan B
3. We've witnessed God providing living water to quench our deeper thirsts
4. We also witnessed God anointing us to open our blinded eyes
5. Then we witnessed the mysterious timing of Jesus, who appears to be too late and yet still brings healing and life
6. Finally, we've witnessed the jubilant praise of people joining the Healed Children's Choir that follows Jesus into his kingdom!

C. That's what we witnessed here in church

1. But perhaps most memorable to many people, is what we witnessed outside of this building: a never-ending winter!
2. It seems having Easter late this year still did not prevent us from seeing snow after Palm Sunday in the middle of April!

II. Lately, thanks be to God, we've been witnessing a different landscape

A. Now we're witnessing lawns & fields really turning green!

1. We're witnessing daffodils & other splashes of color ... Most of the trees & shrubs are finally budding
2. I know that for all you stircrazy types who've been cooped up all winter, this is the time of year that you've been longing for
 - a) You farmers, gardeners, outdoorsy folks: I know your bones have ached to get out there
 - b) For my wife the gardener, on free days like these, no indoor chores can match the satisfaction of spending hours outside, getting hands & knees dirty in the fresh air
3. Yet sometimes our hearts & spirits can lag behind Easter just a bit
 - a) Sometimes the frozen ground deep within us has not truly thawed
 - b) While we try our best to present a warm, green Easter exterior, we cannot fully escape the reality that feels more like a hard stone inside.

B. If this describes you, then our readers theater may especially appeal to you, because it's all about rocks

1. Yes, I realize that it may feel like a stretch to put rocks & Easter together
2. Rocks may not be the automatic visual image you associate with this holy day, but they're actually more appropriate for Easter than you might think.

III. So no matter how you're coming to Easter this morning, whether you're bursting forth with new life, or you're trying to live into the resurrection message that you wish you felt, **watch & listen for the rocks of Easter**

A. As you'll hear soon, sometimes mute, lifeless rocks are actually able to speak volumes

B. Whether you pay much attention to stones or not, **on this Easter day I invite you to be prepared for the most important stone of all ... as we pastors share about "Lifeless rocks and the living stone"**

(All four pastors adapted and performed a reader's theater from 2014 Lent/Easter online resources connected to Leader magazine)