

## “Seeing Jesus Clearly”

Scripture: Luke 24:13-35

Graphics: road, despair, sadness, worship, seeing Jesus

Big Truth: We can process and learn about Jesus on our own or in a small group (family). Yet, in order to get the fullness of Jesus in our lives, we need to be together for worship and to share the Good News of Jesus.

Focus phrase:

### 1. Introduction

- A. Hi! If you’re just joining us, I’m Pastor Steve!
  - i. If you’re joining us for the first time today, or maybe you’ve joined us over the last couple weeks, we welcome you to Panama UMC. Once we can come back together in person, you’re warmly invited to join us in person or online each week.
  - ii. We had an incredible Easter celebration last week. Thank you for joining us as we proclaimed that Jesus is Alive!
- B. This week, honestly, has a little sense of letdown from last week...maybe you’re feeling it, too.
- C. Even though we had to do Easter worship in a very different way last week, IT WAS STILL EASTER! We STILL got to shout Alleluia, Christ the Lord is Risen today! He is STILL Risen! And it was GOOD!
- D. Take a moment right now or right after worship, in the comments, to tell us one thing that you celebrate about this Easter. Put that in the comments below.
- E. But then Monday came...and we were still under COVID-19 isolation. We still can’t come to church together. We still can’t meet or serve TOGETHER, even though we’re doing some amazing things right from where we are.
- F. We may still be experiencing sadness or stress or just “over it”.
- G. In our scripture this morning, it’s the afternoon of Easter morning. It’s a few hours after the women had gone to the tomb and Jesus’ body was not there. It was just after the angel said, “He is not here; He has been raised!”
  - i. The women had gone back to the disciples to tell them that Jesus was alive!
  - ii. Nobody actually saw the risen Jesus, except for Mary, we learn in John’s gospel account of the resurrection.
  - iii. There were a whole bunch of disciples who HEARD that Jesus was alive, but hadn’t yet SEEN him with their eyes.
  - iv. And, honestly, they were doubtful or just didn’t know WHAT to believe.
- H. And, so, what do we do now? That was their question.

- I. It's the same question that I've been asking myself...that you've been asking yourself this week: "Now that Easter has come and gone, and we're still in this social-distancing mode, what do we do now? Where do we go from here?"
- J. Well, there were two followers of Jesus who had been there when Jesus was nailed to the cross...and had been there when Jesus was taken down and placed in the tomb.
- K. They were there with the disciples when the women came back to tell them that Jesus was ALIVE! But, these two followers of Jesus, along with the disciples, just didn't know WHAT to think.
- L. And, frankly, it was a little depressing...a little sad. And, well, they just decided to go home...and, I guess, just do what they had always done. (pause)
- M. In this post-Easter funk, maybe we're feeling some of the same.
- N. Yet, church, there is STILL hope! It's not JUST that Jesus is STILL alive, which He is! It's not that we're looking forward to being together for mission again after this isolation. It's not even that we just can't wait to worship together!
- O. **Our post-Easter HOPE comes because JESUS IS STILL IN OUR MIDST...**right where we are, AND He is calling us to back into community, even now, before we can even come together physically. Our job, right now, is to be on the lookout for Jesus in our midst.
- P. We've called this message *Seeing Jesus Clearly*.
- Q. This morning, we have something a little different for us. But, we're used to different. We'll be hearing three different voices read Luke 24:13-35.
- R. Then, my good friend, and one of my accountability group members, Pastor Matthew French from the Springville UMC and I will bring a message of hope from this passage. It has everything to do with what we're experiencing now...and how that will launch us back together.
- S. Let's pray and then hear the scripture and then Matthew and I will join together to show us how this scripture has some incredible truth for us today.
- T. PRAY!
- U. Turn with us in your bibles to Luke chapter 24...starting in verse 13...

## 2. Scripture

- A. **READ verses 24:13-24 - VIDEO of 3 people reading scripture**
- B. Hi everyone, and welcome to this Zoom Sermon with my good friend Matthew...and greetings to both the Panama and Springville congregations!
- C. The story we've just heard from the first Easter Day has me thinking, "What would I have been feeling at that moment?" Jesus was dead...some women

told us that He was raised from the dead (and were pretty excited about it)... but, then...nothing. No Jesus. Just an empty tomb, a story by the women about an angel and the assurance that THEY believed that Jesus was alive!

- D. Two of Jesus' followers - one whose name is Cleopas and the other we don't know - heard all this, and saw what happened...but then they just decided to go home to Emmaus, a nearby village...I suspect they just didn't know what else to do.
- E. Matthew and I had the privilege to go to Israel together with Stacy and Angie in 2018...I know you remember this spot, Matthew? Here's a picture of what it looks like. This is the place where some scholars think this road to Emmaus was. I even have some gravel from this road.
- F. Picture these two people, having been traumatized by Jesus' death, and the unfounded report of his resurrection, walking along...heads down...long faces...furrowed brows...pensive and reflective and confused.
- G. They were talking with each other about all this, probably to convince themselves that it was all real...and they were comforting each other.
- H. At that moment, it was just the two of them...isolated and sad, wondering what and when the next thing was coming.
- I. Then a stranger shows up to walk with them. This stranger, who we know is Jesus even though they didn't, asks, "What are you talking about?"
- J. And almost out of complete disbelief at the question, they stopped (it says they stood still), and with despair in their eyes and on their faces they simply said, basically, "I can't believe you haven't heard." Which is super-ironic because Jesus was the one TO WHOM these things happened.
- K. Jesus kept pressing them... "What things?" Jesus wanted to know what they believed...he wanted to see where He needed to show up for them.
- L. The answer, though, was a pretty clear Cliff Notes version of the past week. "You know...Jesus, who was mighty in word and deed...who was handed over...and crucified. We'd HOPED he was the one who would deliver us. But it's been a few days since he died...and nothing. Well, except for some story from some women about Jesus being alive. But, we didn't see him, so..."
- M. At that point, Jesus is about ready to burst...they HAD the FACTS right...they just didn't SEE what the facts were showing them. In fact, the FACTS were showing them Jesus...the RISEN JESUS, MESSIAH AND KING.
- N. Jesus said to them, "How foolish...to believe all the things from the OT prophets...that the Messiah had to suffer and die...but still not see it."

- O. So, Jesus went over the lesson again with them...just them...on that road... going back over the details of everything that had happened. Jesus wanted them to truly SEE Him clearly.
- P. It's not really that different than what we do read the Bible, or hear a sermon, or enter into worship. We rehearse the facts...we relive the story. We don't do that just so we get the story straight - the facts straight. We do that so we can be changed by Jesus at the center of the story. So we can worship...
- Q. Matthew, what happens in the rest of this story, because I sense that there's more aspects to this worship, right?
- R. *MATTHEW*** - Thanks Steve, that's powerful. It's one thing to have what seemed to be a casual encounter with someone that was walking in the same direction, but the conversation had been so engaging that they want to go deeper with this stranger they had walked with. As they got close to where they were staying they invited this traveler to stay with them. As Steve mentioned, we begin to see a model that is similar to what we do in worship, but up to this point it is still incomplete.
- S. Proper worship gives space for the story to be shared in scripture, then there is some way that it is interpreted for our lives, this often is in the form of a sermon, but it is not truly worship until we also do what happens here. They invite Jesus in, and they have their hearts open in such a way that they experience his presence. I think one of the reasons that they don't recognise Jesus earlier is that they were not expecting that he could show up. It wasn't that Jesus didn't want to spend more time with them, but I think he wanted them to desire to have him with them.
- T. We certainly see the nod to what we practice as communion as the eyes are opened to recognize Jesus has been with them. But this wasn't formal communion, it was an everyday meal. We know at the Last Supper and the Feeding of the Multitudes that Jesus lifted up the bread, giving thanks before breaking it. They were either around for that, or Jesus did this more often, because it was in the familiar that their eyes were opened to Jesus' presence. This is the key to worship: Jesus was already with them the whole time, but it was their invitation to welcome him that allowed them to deeply experience his presence.
- U. Even though the physical expression of Jesus disappears once their eyes are opened, they now have a deeper experience to share with the other disciples. They haul it back to Jerusalem, eager to be with other believers to share how Jesus had met them in the familiar.
- V. Their worship was NOT meant to just satisfy their own personal hunger that had them in such despair when Jesus showed up on the path. Not only do they know that they need to go and share it with their friends, but all those that

experienced the power of the resurrected Jesus, just a few weeks later are gathered and receive the Holy Spirit and the mission of Jesus spreads like a wildfire across the world. The tragedy they experience Holy Week did not leave them in despair because they worshiped. In letting the story of God's faithfulness and the power of experiencing the resurrected Jesus, their worship lead them to action.

W. Steve, what do you think any of this means for the lives of the people worshipping from home with us today?

### **3. Application**

- A. Look, these two sad disciples were walking away from Jerusalem...then they met Jesus...they saw him clearly after he broke bread with them...and worshipped... At that point, they didn't want to go home anymore, right? ... no, they couldn't wait to get BACK to Jerusalem...back to community...to start the mission that Jesus wanted them to have in the first place.
- B. We're all feeling somewhat sad or just don't know what to think anymore because this season hasn't been ANYTHING like we'd hoped or envisioned. We are walking with Cleopas and his companion...on this dusty road during a crisis. Our heads are down...we're standing still, it seems.
- C. We're spending a lot of time alone or in very small groups of our families.
- D. Yet, despite the challenges of distancing and doing everything we can do to fight this virus, if this virus is driving you to only seek personal comfort or answers for you and your family, then you're missing the power of what Jesus can and wants to do in response to this crisis season.
- E. We've all had time to stop and contemplate our lives in relation to those around us, the church, our communities, and just the freedom to go and do what we want. We tend to be self-focused in so many ways - "What threat does this virus have to my family or to me?" "How am I going to make it through this?"
- F. Now, I'm not discounting those questions and concerns. But, what would it look like if instead of turning inward, you turned most of your attention outward to others...to Jesus...and to building community NOW, so that when we get back together, community will be way better in 3-4 weeks than it ever was before we left for Emmaus?
- G. Every pastor I've talked to has said that there are more people tuning into worship now, even though it's all online, than there were before we were present in our sanctuaries. In one regard, that's incredible! Yet, what can each one of us do now, right where we are, to continue to or start building community, so that when we come back together, we don't leave anyone out on the road of despair?

- H. Some ideas that people are trying: making phone calls, building small groups online, praying online, online meetings, sending cards to those who are alone, evaluating your hunger to be together for worship...
- I. These are things that we've been called to do, church...and these are things that shouldn't end once we can be back together. What we learn now, from our homes, with our families, out here on the dusty road, are things we must put in practice at ALL times.
- J. God has been and will continue to be on the move with US. In fact, we've seen people come to Jesus while we've been apart. We've seen lives changed and people more HUNGRY NOW than I've ever seen in the church. God is UP to something!
- K. Matthew, what do you think is the impact of the things we learn now on the community we have and will have?
- L. MATTHEW...**
- M. As Steve said, it is so important that for us as individuals and hopefully even within our homes that we are asking deep questions, and seeking Jesus through worshiping online, and hopefully even experiencing Christ more in our everyday familiar activities like eating a meal together or taking a walk like this pair in scripture. I love how powerful this pair can talk of how they experienced Jesus, "Were not our hearts burning within us."
- N. Steve has already named a number of ways this time might be hard for us. Certainly it was not what any of us expected of 2020. These Jesus followers had the right to be upset in what they were walking, and so do we. We all know that normal is not what we are experiencing, but are we longing for normal, or do we want to see Jesus transform lives through this hardship?
- O. It took Clopas and his partner longer to see Jesus because they hadn't expected he was going to show up. What does it look like for you to expect Jesus to show up and use this time in our lives for his glory?
- P. I can promise you, that for both Springville and Panama UMC, we will literally be doing what they did in this scripture. We will gather, hear the word, proclaim Jesus' place in our lives, and open ourselves to his presence as we give thanks, break the bread and receive grace. Your pastors miss sharing COMMUNION with you so much.
- Q. But more than a spiritual experience where we seek God's peace for ourselves, more than just getting back to normal church, will we open ourselves to SEE Jesus and let this propel us to deeper mission?
- R. Amen!

- S. I want to thank Matthew for letting me join with him this morning. We're trying to do things in a little different way. We're thankful for technology and the ability to connect in new ways.
- T. Blessings to the Springville and Panama congregations...

#### **4. Conclusion**

- A. Seeing Jesus clearly NOW will give us the passionate motivation and discipline to KEEP seeing Him as He leads us in mission in community.
- B. We may be experiencing some sadness on the road right now, but Jesus is in our midst still...even in our despair...calling us to get ready to do things in a new way...to see Him clearly from the road...
- C. And then RUN (and I mean RUN) back to others to tell the story of everything that Jesus has taught us while in the wilderness, apart from each others...
- D. Hang in there, church...don't let the sadness overwhelm you...every day is a new day to start again...every day is Easter!
- E. He is Risen INDEED! Let's See Jesus Clearly today...
- F. Let's pray...