

## “The Journey of Easter - New Life”

Scripture: Mark 16:1-8

Graphics: road, milestones, tomb, new life

Big Truth: The journey of Easter is a journey of death, new life, waiting, releasing, and being given new power. We often think that the journey is about the destination, but it's not. The journey changes us along the way. If we're intentional about the milestones and knowing more about Jesus on the journey of faith, His death, resurrection, waiting, ascension, and Spirit all transform us into the faithful disciples we are called to be. This Lent, we will spend time in a process of death, rebirth, and being filled with His power. Then, at Holy Week, we will be ready for Him to Rise in us!

Focus Question: What needs to be (re-)born in me to bring new life for the mission of Jesus?

### 1. Introduction

#### A. PRAY! (Jesus, You are Lord...)

- B. I was present in the room when both of my kids were born. It was an amazing moment. It was just as profound as the times I have been at someone's bedside when they die, but in very different way. The anticipation for death is so very different than the months that lead to birth. I think some of it has to do with the modern process of knowing the baby's due date, gender, and just about everything else about the baby in the womb. While the process of dying is usually open-ended, mysterious, and unknown.
- C. Anticipating a birth is filled with such hope and joy, whilst having some fear and anxiety, especially if it's your first child.
- D. Yet, when that day comes - the day of birth - it's not always a process for the faint of heart. I mean (how do I say this without grossing us out), things are usually a little 'messy.' I remember when our daughter Abby was born, the doctor was late, and didn't have time to put on those little booties. Let's just say that Abby may have ruined a really nice pair of Armani shoes. The doctor had the nerve to turn to me and say, "You owe me a pair of shoes!" To which I replied, "You were late!" I honestly couldn't believe we were having an argument while he was holding my precious little daughter, but a man's got to do what a man's got to do!
- E. As it is with the birth of a child, so it is with God's process of birthing new things in us! It can be wonderful and messy at the same time.
- F. As we move to the second milestone in our Journey of Easter, we get to new life. Easter is ALL ABOUT new life when Jesus was raised from the dead. I don't think we spend enough time talking about it when we reserve that for only Easter morning, as awesome as Resurrection Sunday is and will be again this year on April 9th.
- G. Our journey of Easter started with death and what needs to die. But, now, because death is not the boss (even though it can be bossy), God is offering us the possibility of new life.

- H. The question for us this week, as we walk through this journey is, **“What needs to be (re-)born in me to bring new life for the mission of Jesus?”**
- I. This is all about Jesus. The reason we allow God to let things die in us - sin or circumstances or whatever it is that you are letting die - is because Jesus died to bury that for you. The reason we turn to God again to ask what needs to be born or reborn in us is because Jesus’ resurrection gives us the roadmap and the purpose for new life.
- J. Jesus is calling every single one of us to his mission daily. That means He wants us give up our current life (to die to self) to be reborn and follow Him. But it also means that He wants us to go out into the world to BE like Him and tell others about Him, so that new life is contagious.
- K. Lent is the time to spend time asking, “What needs to be (re-)born in me to bring new life for the mission of Jesus?”
- L. And because it’s all about Jesus, let’s go back to the gospel of Mark, to see what new life looked like in Jesus’ life...but really this is more about the disciples than it is about Jesus, since in THIS gospel, Jesus never makes an appearance, except by name. For a small group of women and then the disciples, this new life was a little rocky to start...
- M. Turn with me to Mark chapter 16, starting in verse 1.

## 2. Scripture

### A. READ Mark 16:1-8

- B. Last week, we came to the conclusion that death is messy. It was messy for Jesus, who died a horrific death on a Roman cross. Yet, through His death, the door to new life was opened up.
- C. Jesus’ death caused the temple curtain to be torn in two from top to bottom. Jesus’ death proved to the Centurion that Jesus was the Son of God. Jesus’ death for the women and disciples was the pivot point in their lives. Yet, just because the doorway was opened to them and us, that doesn’t mean that death wasn’t messy...that death isn’t a painful and life-changing experience. It is!
- D. I pray you’ve spent time asking, “What needs to die in me in order for God to bring new life?” Death is about what needs to end, so that new life can come.
- E. In last week’s gospel reading, the same women who appear in today’s reading were at the cross, watching from a distance. They’d watched Jesus die...and something inside them died as well. They’d been part of Jesus’ life for almost three years...and served him and loved him. As they watched him die, they experienced the messy emotions of grief, sadness, anger, denial, and probably a whole bunch of other things.
- F. That was a Friday. Saturday was the Jewish Sabbath, so they had to just sit in this messy grief and pain for all day Saturday.

- G. At sundown Saturday, the Sabbath was over and they could DO something. Finally! They chose to go buy spices at the market so they could anoint the body of Jesus the next morning. See, taking Jesus' body down from the cross and burying him in a tomb was rushed. It was against Jewish law to anoint or even touch a dead body on the Sabbath, which started at sundown on Friday. A guy named Joseph of Arimathea did that.
- H. After what may have been a fitful night's rest, the women were ready to go to the tomb. They were ready to see if they could begin to work through some of the messiness of death. They weren't about to let death push them around, even as they worked through their emotions and grief.
- I. The problem was, they had no clue how they were going to move the stone in front of the tomb in order to get to Jesus' body. Even though they didn't have a plan, they didn't know what else to do.
- J. When they got to the tomb, things started to unfold pretty rapidly:
- i. The stone was rolled away! Wow!
  - ii. They bravely went into the tomb, thinking that they would just anoint the body and leave. They were still in death mode.
  - iii. When they got in there, an angel was sitting on the burial stone...a young man, in dazzling white robes...what in the world?
  - iv. And they were alarmed (Mark said). I bet! The sense here is that they were afraid, confused, wondering, worried, maybe skeptical.
- K. But then here's where the death of Jesus begins to take on the first hints of new life. The angel was abundantly clear:
- i. Do not be alarmed. "Ya, right!"
  - ii. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth. "Well, sort of..."
  - iii. Who was crucified. "Well, at least we have the right guy, but..."
  - iv. He has been raised. "Like, from the dead?"
  - v. He is not here. "We can see that."
  - vi. Look, there is the place they laid him. (looking to see)
  - vii. But GO, tell his disciples and Peter that he's going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he said. "I don't know...are you sure?"
- L. It was probably a lot to take in...and the women went out from the tomb and fled the scene. Mark said terror and amazement seized them. They were freaked out.
- M. See, death can cause a lot of messiness in our lives. Yet, as we learned last week, death has the very real potential to create new life.

- N. In the case of these women, and the disciples whom they went and told, death had them locked down. We'd like to think that the announcement that "Jesus was alive" would snap them out of it and they'd be ready to believe and be powerful witnesses to the resurrection.
- O. That's not how it went for the women...and I suspect that's not always how it goes for us in our faith life, either.
- P. Going from death to life always entails a pretty radical shift. But new life is rarely as clean and beautiful as we think, at the beginning.
- Q. The women and disciples would eventually get to Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit filled them set them on fire for Jesus and his mission. But the morning of the resurrection was something completely new...shocking...alarming. They needed some time to let something be born in them in order to see what the future mission would become.
- R. Mark tells us they said nothing to anyone. That's curious, because we know that's just not true. Scholars think that Mark was talking about the disciples who heard this account from the women. The disciples didn't tell anyone that they were going to Galilee to meet Jesus because they were afraid that the Romans or the Jewish authorities would create trouble for them.
- S. Regardless, it was in that moment - that moment they realized Jesus had been raised from the dead to new life, just like he said - that something new was about to be born in them. Something was straining to be re-born. Something like hope. Something like joy! Something that would change everything. And THAT birth process was (is) not easy. It's messy. It's slow, sometimes.

### **3. Application**

- A. What needs to be (re-)born in you to bring new life for the mission of Jesus?
- B. As you've spent time thinking and praying about what needs to die in you, so that you'll be more ready to follow Jesus this Lent, now we go to the next milestone...what needs to be reborn or born in you?
- C. Death, as difficult as it is, always leaves room for new life. Always.
  - i. When we let sin die, the Holy Spirit wants to fill that with new holiness.
  - ii. Our deaths create space for new possibilities. God wants to use those new spaces for His glory...to use YOU for His glory.
- D. But how? How can you and I begin to allow something new to be born in us? The longer you've held onto that particular sin or allowed that dead thing to occupy your mind and heart, the harder it is to begin to create new space for new life.
- E. As difficult as it can be to let things die, it can be just as difficult to let God do something new in its place.

- i. If I've been holding onto a grudge against someone because of something they said or did, and I finally let that die, then what?
  - ii. If you've been hiding a particular sin from the world, and you're just sick of that...and you've begun to allow that to die, what will the future be like?
- F. The women and the disciples of Jesus had really no idea what the future would be like. BUT (listen now) **they knew Jesus would be part of it again.** He was alive! He was not dead! And as scared and confused as they were to let Him die, NOW they had to respond to the fact that He was alive!
- G. And, for them, something NEW was being born in them...and that's how it can work in YOUR life as well.
- H. Jesus's resurrection is a PROMISE. It's a promise that death is not the end. It's a promise that new life is the next step. And that He will be with you.
- I. From a discipleship perspective, the more sin and distractions and life-taking systems and relationships you let die in your life, the more room you make for Jesus to make you new...to give you new life and new life-giving systems.
- J. And, look, this takes a high level of humility, sober judgment, prayer, vulnerability, even painful honesty. Are you willing? Are you ready to accept Jesus' offer of new life in those areas that you've done the work of letting things die?
- K. Let me try to give you a roadmap from today's encounter with the angel dressed in dazzling white. That young man was the messenger God sent to set the women on a track from death to new life. It's for us too!
- i. It all starts with an INVITATION.
    - a. He said, "Don't be alarmed. You're looking for Jesus. He's not here. Come, see where he was..."
    - b. The angel invited the women to begin to believe a new thing in a new way. He knew it might take some time.
    - c. God's invitation for you to allow something holy to be born in you after death is genuine and true. And He's patient in your life for you to respond.
    - d. The doorway that opened at Jesus' death is the very doorway you're invited to walk through for the beginning of new life.
    - e. Instead of pride, you're invited to humility. Instead of grief, you're invited to move to joy. Instead of control, you're invited to trust God. Whatever the Holy Spirit has helped die in you, that's the place where the Spirit will start inviting you to new life.
  - ii. The second step was complete VERIFICATION of reality.

- a. We all need proof. The women in Jesus' empty tomb saw that he wasn't there. The angel was showing them the proof. He was verifying that what he was saying was true: Jesus, who was crucified, was raised, and is not here. He's going on ahead of you and will meet you.
  - b. The proof that the thing you've allowed to die in you has really died is that it has no power over you anymore. Or the power it HAD is getting less and less. If you let your sin die, then the temptation it has in your life starts to fade. And then one day you realize, if you've truly allowed God to do a work, that it holds no power over you. That's proof.
  - c. Verification of death leads you to the beginning of new life. And when you realize that the death led to the beginning of new life, it gives you confidence that Jesus is at work in you. That's verification.
- iii. The final part of the angel's message was a Command to GO!
- a. This is all about the mission. For the women it was about telling the disciples and then going to Galilee.
  - b. For you and me, it's about allowing Jesus to birth something new so that there's passion for the lost and a desire to serve God. The mission is to GO and TELL.
  - c. When you're at the basketball game or the office, you have less of the thing that died and more of the things that beginning to born - hope, love, patience, grace, spiritual maturity. That's what God is ready to birth in you. And THAT is what we must share with others!
  - d. This is for you and for me, everyday ordinary followers of Jesus who are empowered by the Spirit, unencumbered by death, and beginning to be filled with new life. Are you ready? Can you feel it?

#### **4. Conclusion**

- A. The human birth process is messy. Really messy. Allowing God to birth something new in us for our faith life is no less messy, just in a different way.
- B. This week, as you're continuing the process of allowing the Holy Spirit to identify the things in your life that need to die, start from there to begin to allow the Spirit to bring the first signs of new life in those spaces. Jesus will be with you.
- C. Respond to the invitation. Let God verify the process and progress. Then go forward with a new sense of hope for what Jesus is calling you to do and be.
- D. Let's PRAY!**