

* H E I S R I S E N *

CELEBRATING EASTER TOGETHER

April 1, 2018

*To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus.
- CG Mission Statement*

Worship: Give Me Jesus by C.S. Brown

In the morning, when I rise	Jesus
In the morning, when I rise	Give me Jesus
In the morning, when I rise	
Give me Jesus	When I come to die
	When I come to die
Give me Jesus	Oh, when I come to die
Give me Jesus	Give me Jesus
You can have all this world	
Just give me Jesus	Give me Jesus
	Give me Jesus
When I am alone	You can have all this world
When I am alone	Just give me Jesus
Oh, when I am alone	
Give me Jesus	Give me Jesus
	Give me Jesus
Give me Jesus	You can have all this world
Give me Jesus	You can have all this world
You can have all this world	You can have all this world
Just give me Jesus	Just give me Jesus

Icebreaker

What was your favorite part of Easter growing up?

Text for Discussion: John 20:1-18

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

Every good gift God desires to give us in Christ can only be grasped by faith. Meaning there's nothing more valuable in our lives. One of the clearest pictures of faith is found in John 20's depiction of Easter where we see that it is personal, miraculous, reasonable and gracious.

Faith is personal. No two people come to faith the same way – just as Mary, John, Peter and Thomas all encounter the risen Jesus differently. Which means we don't have to be a certain type of person to come to faith. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, knows His sheep and calls them by name, meeting us in our deepest need. God calls us personally and tells us who we truly are in Christ, and our story finally begins to make sense. Knowing our true identity means we can finally let go of the lies we've let define our lives for far too long. Rather than be defined by our work, faith says we are what Jesus has done for us, and our primary work is to receive His love. Rather than be defined by

our achievements or possessions, faith says our identity is received, given to us by God. Rather than be defined by what others think of us, faith says we are who God says we are: His beloved children.

Faith is miraculous. It's difficult for us to admit there is a God and that we are not Him. To admit this is to admit we aren't in control of our lives. This resistance prevents us from coming to faith without God's enabling power. We need to admit this about ourselves; it's where healing begins. For it's our refusal to surrender control to God that makes us lost, not our vices. It's what sin ultimately is: running from God so we can maintain control. And, this is the very reason we need His grace and forgiveness. Our Father forgives without being ashamed of us – just as Jesus calls His disciples brothers even after they'd abandoned Him. Because God's love is miraculous.

Faith is reasonable. Faith is miraculous, but that doesn't mean we ever need to leave reason behind while on our journey. Although our faith is personal, the truth of Christ is not limited or defined by our own experience. The reliability of the Christian Faith is based on evidence that stands apart from us. It's true: people were more open to the supernatural then, but we shouldn't conclude it was easier for them to believe in Jesus' resurrection. They still required multiple sightings and hands-on experiences to be convinced Jesus had come back to life. We have to accept that the evidence which compelled their faith just might be enough to convince us too.

Faith is gracious. Our acceptance with God isn't based on what we do or what we have. Jesus comes to those who know they are weak. Our faith is therefore always full of grace. More than believing Jesus is our teacher, we come to see Him as our rescuer. We've encountered the risen Christ and experienced His grace.

Faith acknowledges God's enduring presence with us. When Jesus spoke of ascending to His Father, He said He would send His Spirit so we could know God's comfort, presence, and peace – anywhere and always. We may not have Jesus in front of us, but because of the Holy Spirit, we have Him within us. And His presence and power will help us face whatever might come our way until we make our way home to see our Father face to face.

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

According to the Bible, what does faith mean?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

Opening Questions/Digging In

- What is most striking to you about this account of Jesus' resurrection?
- Reading the resurrection story, we see that Jesus appears to Mary and the disciples in different ways according to what each person needed. How have you encountered Jesus?
 - How has it been personal to you?
 - Jesus called Mary by name in this passage. What might it look like for Jesus to call you by name?
- Mary's grief and pain initially prevents her from seeing Jesus who is standing right in front of her. What do you think makes it difficult for you to sometimes see, with the eyes of faith, the God who is right in front of you?
- Henry Nouwen writes that we live under three lies: I am what I do, I am what I have and I am what other people think I am.
 - How might you be living under the lie "I am what I do"? Read Eph. 2:8-9 as an antidote to that lie.
 - How might you be living under the lie "I am what I have"? Read Col. 3:1-3 as an antidote to that lie.
 - How might you be living under the lie "I am what other people think I am"? Read Romans 8:16-17 as an antidote to that lie.
 - How can we help each other live out of our true self?
- What does Jesus, through his resurrection tell us who we truly are?
- How has your faith been miraculous? How did God get your attention?
 - In what areas of your life might you need to release control to God?
- Combined with experience, what evidence has been most compelling to you in your faith journey?
- How have you experienced God's grace in your life?

Application Questions

- How can we help each other believe that we are Christ's beloved children?
- How can we help each other hear the voice of Jesus this week?
- Is there someone you could invite to a Life Explored group? Consider inviting them this week. Click here for more information: <http://pacificcrossroads.org/event/52/life-explored-dinners/>

Experiment of the week

(A suggestion for engagement in following the way of Jesus this week)

- Of the 3 lies that Henry Nouwen writes that we might be living under (I am what I do, I am what I have and I am what other people think of me), which one do you resonate most with? Take the week to find scripture that speaks to our identity in Christ. Each day meditate over a verse and journal about it. Come back to the group next week to share your experience.