

## Sermon Discussion Information

Sermon Series: "On the Way" Lent and Holy Week Series

Sermon Title: "Awakening to Mystery"

Sermon Text: Luke 24:1-12

Listener's Journey: I want my listener to see the life, death and resurrection of Christ as both a profound mystery reordering the human experience and a new patterned way to live a joyful life of love.

### Unique Quotes from Sermon:

I share this on Easter Sunday because we have spent this year's Lenten season and Holy Week framing our special worship services as being "On the Way" with Jesus. We have explored the gospel biographies with the ups and downs of Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem—all for the purpose of being more awake to similar kinds of lessons, interruptions, and learnings in the pilgrimage of our day to day lives. The beauty and curiosity of our artists work and reflection on such things as "The Conference of the Birds" points out that for something as monumental as Holy Week to be useful, it must be framed as relevant to every aspect and season of our lives ranging from lessons in love and wisdom to the more difficult matters of dualisms and fear of death.

This is important to remember because in the life of Jesus, Holy Week was a final leg of the pilgrimage of *Jesus'* life and ministry. His teaching and healing ministry spanned three years and engaged said themes and more in that alongside wisdom teachings and miracles Jesus turned all religious practices on end and reframed how we understand others, even those who we consider our enemy.<sup>1</sup> Jesus clarified that true love includes embrace of our neighbor regardless of culture or creed, and that laying down one's life for another is the greatest expression of love the cosmos over.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, how do we apply such profundities to our day to day life and what does Easter Sunday have to do with the Monday after Easter? You know, tomorrow, when we return to school, jobs, and highly routinized life. Or, how does Easter help us with any number of struggles? The notion of God conquering death can feel quite abstract in the face of opposition or a crumbling marriage, or someone we love having cancer, or the hole in our heart because of a dear friend recently passed away. And, then there is the stomach ache that returns every time the topic of American politics is raised. How does the Easter resurrection help with that?!

Well, if we can think of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ as both a profound mystery that reordered the human experience *and* a new patterned way to life a joyful life of love, Easter can become more than just an annual event of songs and sermons. *Easter, at its best, is center point to lifelong pilgrimage.* And, in the spirit of the first Christ followers on roads near Jerusalem, and all people who traverse such roads as the El Camino de Santiago alongside others; we are invited to go on our pilgrimages together through good and bad experiences, while encouraging one another, stopping for meals, serving strangers with hospitality, and perhaps most important of all---seeing and accepting one another across many cultures, young or old, poor or rich, straight or LGBTQ, able or disabled, and yes, seeing even Republican, Democrat or Independent, as equal sojourners on the path of life.

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If life is a pilgrimage and Easter is the center point for Christ followers, it is imperative that the *meaning* of Easter frame our pilgrimage. On one level the first Easter was the epicenter of God's redefinition of the human experience. People and religions before Christ related to God largely on the

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 5.

<sup>2</sup> John 15:12-13.

basis of codes and merit systems. And in regards to sin and the problem of evil the practice of scapegoating and blood sacrifice was used often.

One of the Creator's intent behind Jesus' death and resurrection was that the human experience would be reoriented for all time to reject scapegoating and blame in favor of grace through faith. And with the intent of sustained relationship between people and God on the basis of faith, hope, and love, with the greatest being love.<sup>3</sup> And, it is love that is most important because in Jesus the holy ground of unmerited favor reframes that which goes wrong in our lives not as points for accusation, but as fertile soil for our deepest invitations and transformations.

Talk about a reset. And, a whole new way to see ourselves and the world around us. Easter, on one level, is about freeing ourselves from faulty thinking and harmful religion to love and be loved.

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Jesus did not strike back when struck, he said his peace and embodied his truth without stridently fighting his way through the courts. And, when Jesus' truth was rejected and his opponents threw him into the violent Roman crucifixion machine, right before he died Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."<sup>4</sup> Not a mic drop, if you think about it! And, yet right after that his final words were the mic drop of all time: "It. Is. Finished."<sup>5</sup>

Suffering love. Undying love. And, then resurrected love. Christian author Cynthia Bourgeault writes:

"It begins right there at the foot of the cross, heralded by a new quality of presence already caught by [a] centurion in his hushed exclamation, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" In that moment of Jesus' death, the innermost essence of divine love was released into the planet as a palpable force that continues to make its energetic presence directly known."<sup>6</sup>

From that moment on, the Creator of all things put a new defining pattern of true love into our world that both changes the world and gives us the tools for transforming human consciousness over the long arch of time:

- Loving others even at the cost of suffering alongside them...
- Accepting that the cost may be as high as experiencing loss and death...
- Being resurrected to a new way of seeing and loving...

That is a wholly original pattern, designed by God alongside the origins of time itself, and yet largely not known to human consciousness 2,000 years ago. And, today, in many ways, a pattern that still seems hidden even in Christian religion.

Three Discussion Questions:

1. How does Easter change the way you think about reality? (Personal sharing)
2. What words or phrases of the Scripture speak to you as you read it? Why? (Exploring the text)
3. How have you seen the Christ pattern at work in your life? (Direct application)

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 13.

<sup>4</sup> Luke 23:34.

<sup>5</sup> John 19:30.

<sup>6</sup> Cynthia Bourgeault, The law of Three in Action. Imaginal Resolution. Center for Contemplation and Action Devotion. Tuesday, March 21, 2017.