

WAYPOINTS
MONDAY, 4/1

Read Luke 24:1-12.

These women loved Jesus. Luke tells us that they often served Him and looked out after His needs. They followed Jesus and even contributed money to His mission. While some of the disciples ran in fear during Jesus' final moments, they are there "watching from a distance." They didn't want to watch, but they couldn't leave Him either. When He was placed in the grave, they wanted to care for Him even in His death.

Several years ago, my cousin lost his daughter in an accident. As we were leaving the graveside, he took the shovel and began filling in her grave. I've been to probably 100 funerals, but I've never seen anything like it. It was his way of showing his love for her by caring for her one last time.

These women wanted to do the same. They loved Jesus, more so than you and I. They were willing to stay during His dying moments. They were willing to go back and care for His body days after His death, defying Jewish purity laws. They loved Jesus. Even though they loved Jesus, they still weren't expecting an empty tomb. They went to the grave that day expecting to deal with death.

When they got to the tomb, it was empty. Their first thought was that someone had taken the body. A new wave of grief flooded over them. They had already lost Jesus' life; now they lost His body. In the midst of the confusion, two angels appear to fill in the missing pieces. They ask the women, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead?' What a question!

People often make a habit of looking for life in the midst of dead things. We think that the latest and greatest gadget will make us feel better about our lives. We think a new spouse or more stuff will fill the void we have in our souls. We figure maybe if our kid were better than other kids at something, then we'd be happy. Others use dead things to escape life. We run to alcohol, drugs, affairs, fantasy, and pornography in order to escape, yet this question remains: "Why do you look for life among dead things?" The reality is there is no life in such things. Life is found only in the One who brought forth life in the beginning. Life is found in Christ alone.

After the angel reminds the women of Jesus' teachings, it all comes rushing back to them. Filled with newfound joy and excitement, they run to the disciples to tell them the news. They struggle to share their enthusiasm. They just can't wrap their minds around the whole thing. Some of us feel that way when it comes to the empty tomb. None of us knows anyone who has defeated death, then again this isn't just anyone. The disciples would soon see for themselves and believe.

While the resurrection can be difficult to understand, it is the event on which our faith hinges. Without the resurrection, we are, as Paul says, "to be pitied above all people."

The resurrection of Christ is *the reason* we have hope both in this life and for the life to come. Christ has risen...Christ has risen indeed!

Praying Together:

"Christ, we are amazed at Your glory and power that was displayed at the resurrection. We are thankful that You truly rose from the grave and that we can have confidence that You are who You claim to be. As Easter people, we celebrate the life that You have given us. Help us continue to walk in the fullness of Your life, both in this life and in our life to come. Amen."

WAYPOINTS

TUESDAY, 4/2

Read John 20:31.

John wrote his gospel so that we would know the life available to us in Christ. John had tasted it. He knew the glories of trusting and walking with Jesus. He wants you to know it as well.

In John 10:10, Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." Jesus wants us to experience the greatest life possible. He wants us to be full of vitality. When I think of the idea of fullness, I think of a recent visit to the restaurant Texas de Brazil. If you've not been to this eatery, do yourself a favor and go. It's sort of expensive but well worth it. They have the best meat, and you can eat as much of it as you want. I have little self-control in such an environment. I tend to eat too much, and this particular visit was no different. By the time I had finished, I could barely move. I was so full I couldn't possibly eat any more.

Jesus wants us to experience so much life that we couldn't possibly receive any more. This kind of life is available for us in Christ. Jesus can open us up to a quality of life that exceeds our wildest imagination. He wants us to experience that reality. It's the kind of life we were created to know, and it's possible when we live into our true identity.

We're going to spend this week examining what abundant life looks like through the lens of our identity as God's children. I encourage you to begin praying that God would open your eyes to who you are to Him. As we draw nearer to Him, we will discover the life found in the name of Jesus.

Praying Together:

"Jesus, I long to know You more. I want to walk in Your life. I want to taste the abundance of life You give just as John did. You want me to experience it. Remind me that the life I long for is found only in You, not the things to which the world points me. I trust that You are the great Life-giver. Lead me deeper into Your life and the life everlasting. Amen."

WAYPOINTS
WEDNESDAY, 4/3

Read John 21:1-5.

At the end of Matthew's gospel, Jesus encourages the disciples to go to Galilee, where He promised to meet them. While in Galilee, the disciples go fishing. It was Peter's idea. He had grown up around the Sea of Galilee and was a fisherman before He was called by Jesus. It made sense.

They went out into the waters to fish for the night. In perhaps the only true tale ever coming out of the mouth of a fisherman, John admits they didn't catch anything. They had struck out to land a catch and had fallen flat. You don't have to be a fisherman to know what that feels like.

We all have those experiences in life. We embark on a new venture only to have it fall short of our expectations. We start every adventure--whether it's parenting, work or school--with hopes of success, yet more often than not, the result plays out differently than we had imagined. We've put in our best efforts only to have them fall...well, flat.

Now I'm going to speak to this from what I have learned from my own experiences in this arena. Maybe we've fallen flat because we've traded following the Lord for following our own agenda. The disciples were called to go to Galilee to wait for Jesus; instead, they went back to fishing.

I know the most unproductive times in my life have been the times I struck out on my own. I worked on my ideas, served out of my own strength. The truth was that I exhausted myself and felt as if I had little fruit to show for my effort. I had to strike out more times than I'd like to admit to learn that I'm insufficient. The truth is I need God's presence, provision, and power to yield the catch to which I am called. As this story will teach us, true success comes from being obedient to the Lord.

Praying together:

"Lord, just like Your disciples, I have missed the mark. I have plowed my own path rather than waiting for You. I have struggled to trust You in spite of Your trustworthiness. I am thankful that the patience You showed Your disciples many years ago is the same patience You show me. I bring a teachable spirit to You, my great Teacher. Teach me to trust You and what it means to follow You. Amen."

WAYPOINTS
THURSDAY, 4/4

Read John 21:6.

Jesus shows up as His disciples flounder around on the sea. We'll see that when Jesus takes the helm, so to speak, the disciples have a much different result for their labors.

Jesus tells them to toss the net on the right side of the boat. I'm sure the notion of casting the nets out once again seemed foolish, but their willingness to trust, even if they were somewhat reluctant, yielded results that surpassed their expectations, even dreams. Their catch was so great that they couldn't even reel it in. Don't you want that for your life? Wouldn't you love to cast your net--whatever that looks like to you--and see something amazing happen?

I believe God wants that for our lives. We have each been gifted and called to share in the work of God's Kingdom. For some, that looks like teaching a Sunday school class; for others, it's serving in a church ministry. We're called to bear fruit for the Kingdom in our marriages and in our roles as parents and grandparents. God wants to do amazing things for His Kingdom through us, but the reality is if we want to see Him move, we must first listen to what He says.

In Ephesians, Paul addresses God as "the One who is able to do immeasurably more than we could ask or imagine." What that means is that God is not limited. We're the ones who limit God because we don't have the courage to ask Him to do something great. We limit Him because we don't have the faith to dream big enough. Maybe it's time for you to stop limiting God and start listening to Him.

Praying together:

"God, You are able to do more than I have the capacity to imagine. I know that You desire to work through me to accomplish Your great purposes. I'm humbled by that. I am not the easiest vessel for You to choose, but You are delighted to have me join You as You work in our world. Show me where and how to cast my net. You will bring the fish; all I have to do is toss it in the right direction. Amen."

WAYPOINTS

FRIDAY, 4/5

Read John 21:7-13.

Straining against the weight of the catch triggered Peter's memory. There was only one other time in his fishing career that had yielded such a catch. It was over three years before, when a man he had just met named Jesus stepped onto his boat to finish His sermon while the fishermen cleaned their nets. After concluding the sermon, Jesus turned to Peter and asked him to row out and drop the net. Peter was reluctant, but he followed through. The catch was so great that it filled two boats to the point they nearly sank. Peter knew in that moment that he was in the presence of Someone great.

Peter recalled that day, and when it played out again, he recognized that the Man on the shore who told him to drop his nets was indeed Jesus. Peter dove into the water and swam to Him.

There on the shore Jesus offers to cook some of the catch; in fact, He had already started the fire. John's gospel in its original language helps us see that the fire Jesus made for the disciples was the same kind of charcoal fire Peter used to warm his hands when he denied Jesus three times. This was intentional. Jesus wants to bring Peter back to that fateful moment. Jesus needed him to confront his worst failure if he was to move forward.

I wonder what failures God needs to redeem in your life. I imagine we all have failed to be the children, parents, employees, and followers of Jesus we would like to be. It's easy to wallow in our failures. It's even easier to use past failures as excuses to justify inaction in the present. Don't allow your past failures to determine who you are. Invite God to redeem them.

Truth be told, if Peter's failure had not been redeemed, he would've been tempted to remain a fisherman. He likely would've settled for a life that was far less than what God had in mind for him, but Jesus restored Peter, who would go on to take the Good News of Jesus to the world.

Praying Together:

"Jesus, I am so grateful that You are eager to forgive and heal. You came to us and gave Yourself for us so that we could experience the joy of freedom in and through You. I take up that freedom today. I walk in the beauty of Your grace that restores me and frees me to serve You. Show me how I can bless You this day. Amen."

WAYPOINTS

SATURDAY, 4/6

Read John 21:14-19.

When Peter goes back to Galilee, he went back to fishing. It was an easy move for him to make. As we have seen before, he had been a fisherman before Jesus showed up in his life. It was natural for him to go back to fishing. It's what he knew. It was familiar and safe.

The only problem was that Peter wasn't just a fisherman anymore. Jesus had called and equipped him to fish for people, not fish, yet Peter was perhaps on the brink of going back to the life he had known before Jesus.

I believe Jesus picks up on this tension. When He goes to reinstate Peter, Jesus calls him by his given name, Simon. Peter was actually the name given to Simon by Jesus. From John 1 on, Jesus refers to Simon as Peter, except right here in chapter 21. So why does Jesus revert to addressing Peter as Simon here? Perhaps Jesus calls him by his old name because he had gone back to his old life.

In the Bible, a change in name signals a change in identity. When Simon was renamed Peter to go with his calling as one who will lead the church to fish for people, Peter was acting like Simon. Jesus wanted him to be Peter again. Jesus asks Simon three times if he loved Him, then Jesus told him that if he did, then he needed to let go of his old identity and "follow Me."

I wonder if there isn't a part of your old identity that you hold onto that's getting in the way of the new identity to which Jesus is calling you. Are you willing to let it go to follow Him?

Praying together:

"Lord, I have often retreated from the new identity You have given me. How easy it is to fall back into my old ways. Fill me with courage to stand in who You say that I am. I know and claim that in You I am a new creation. The old life has gone, so help me walk in the new life. I believe that in this new life there are joys that are eternal. Amen."

WAYPOINTS
SUNDAY, 4/7

Read John 17:3.

This is one of my favorite verses. What I love about it is that it flies in the face of how we tend to define eternal life. When we think of eternal life, we think of going to heaven when we die. Indeed, that is one of the perks of life in Jesus, but it's not the entire story. The reality of what Jesus is saying here is that the glorious life we imagine with Him in heaven is available to us now.

Abundant life in Jesus isn't something that happens after death; it's something that we experience here and now. The glory of the life we will someday know in heaven comes from knowing God completely. When we begin the journey of knowing God here, we experience that same glory. Sure, we may not know God fully here, but we can know Him, and our knowledge will grow as we continue to walk with Him.

Life is found in knowing God as He is revealed to us in Jesus. The beauty of this reality is that we can know God because He has revealed Himself to us. God has made Himself known to us through the scriptures. The stories of God's dealings with us enable us to understand Him and what He cares about.

Of course, God is most clearly seen in the life of Jesus. Jesus took our form and lived our life so that we could understand God. Jesus, the One whom the Father sent, perfectly embodies God's heart toward His broken creation. Through Jesus, we see the Father's willingness to lay down that which was of most importance to Him, His Son, that we might have life through Him. This tells us of our value to the Father and how great He is. Jesus' life and teachings affirm the greatness of God and offer us a clear picture of who He is.

The Holy Spirit also reveals God to us. As the Spirit dwells in us through our faith in Christ, we are able to experience for ourselves the power and presence of God. John tells us that the Spirit continues Christ's work of teaching His followers.

What is evident is that we cannot claim ignorance of God. God has made Himself known. God continues to make Himself known to us. The question is: Are we seeking more of Him?

Praying together:

"Holy Spirit, I have often reduced eternal life to what happens after I die. There is so much more to that life than what happens after my last breath. It is a life that permeates every breath I take. You have made it possible for me to walk in the fullness of that kind of life here and now. Continue to show me who You are. Open my eyes and heart to experience You. I want to know You as You are. Teach me how to seek You in all I do. Amen."