

How To Rise With Christ

On Easter Sunday, we concluded our sermon series called “The Beauty of Christ – Living in Me” by focusing on the resurrection and asking how we can rise with Christ.

1. Warm-up Question: As we try to imagine how the disciples felt when they saw Jesus alive again, consider this question: Has there ever been someone or something precious to you that you thought you were going to lose, but got back again? What happened? How did you feel?
2. After Jesus rose, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene and several other women, then to Peter, then to two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Our Scripture reading picks up the story as the disciples have gathered to discuss what to make of the foregoing appearances. Read Luke 24:36-49.
 - a. Imagine yourself in the same room. You’re listening with rapt attention to the story of various resurrection sightings, when you hear a familiar voice behind you saying, “Peace be still.” Everyone whirls around and sees Jesus standing there. In that moment what do you imagine you would have felt or thought? How would you have reacted?
 - b. Verse 38 mentions “fright” and “doubt.” Why were some of them frightened? Why did some doubt?
 - c. Verse 41 says, “In their joy, they were disbelieving and still wondering.” Have you ever felt that mix of emotions about anything? What happened?
3. The resurrection is not meant to be something that we look back on wistfully, thinking, “If only I could have been there.” The miracle of Easter is meant to be ongoing, constantly replicated in and through us.
 - a. Romans 6:4 says, “That’s what baptism into the life of Jesus means. When we are lowered into the water, it is like the burial of Jesus. When we are raised up out of the water, it’s like the resurrection of Jesus, so that now we also may live new lives.” What do you understand this verse to be saying?
 - b. Ephesians 1:19 says, “I pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead. . . .” What do you understand this verse to be saying?
4. As Jesus went through his literal death/resurrection cycle, his disciples went through their own metaphorical death/resurrection cycle. In the aftermath of the crucifixion, they were dependent, defeated, and despondent. Yet within weeks, they would reemerge courageous, confident, and triumphant, ready to birth the church. If we can understand how the disciples managed to rise from the ashes like Christ, their experience can serve as a road map for us. Jeff suggested four key steps. **Step 1: When facing failure or misfortune, we must be willing to reinvent ourselves.**

- a. Before his death, Jesus began warning his disciples that they were going to have to reinvent themselves. For example, read John 16:4-7. In what way was Jesus inviting the disciples to reinvent themselves in this passage?
 - b. When have you ever had to reinvent yourself? What happened?
 - c. Why is it so important that we be prepared to keep reinventing ourselves?
5. **Step 2: When facing failure or misfortune, we must be willing to tap into our inner power (the Holy Spirit).** When gathered with his disciples after the resurrection, “Jesus breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” John 20:22. By this act, he was alerting them that they would soon experience an inner power unlike anything ever before. Jeff shared his own story about giving his cat injections – something he never thought he could bring himself to do – and Louann Lowring’s story of finding strength to care for her brother when all strength was gone. Have you ever experienced a surprising inner power? When/where? What’s the best way to tap into that power?
 6. **Step 3: When facing failure or misfortune, we must be willing to open ourselves to a period of listening and discernment.** After the resurrection, Jesus told his disciples, to stay in seclusion in Jerusalem until they received power from on high. So they spent the next 40 days in prayer and conversation, figuring out what was next. Ruth Haley Barton says, “Discernment involves listening with love and attention to our experiences, to each other, to the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit deep within ourselves and others, to Scripture and Christian tradition, to pertinent facts and information, to those who will be affected most deeply by our decisions, to that place in us where God’s Spirit witnesses with our spirit about those things that are true.” How many different kinds of listening does Barton identify here? What part of her quote most speaks to you – and why?
 7. **Step 4: When facing failure or misfortune, we must be willing to act boldly.** The disciples took this step on the Day of Pentecost, when they threw caution to the wind and went public. Earl Woods did it when he claimed his 2-year-old son was destined to become golf’s greatest player. A mother in our church did it when she confronted an oral surgeon and begged her to make room in her schedule for her son. In the movie, “We Bought The Zoo,” Benjamin Mee says, “Sometimes all you need is twenty seconds of insane courage. Just literally twenty seconds of embarrassing bravery. And I promise you, something great will come of it.” Where in your life right now do you feel called to act boldly? Have you engaged in enough listening and discernment? What holds you back?
 8. Take a look back through the four steps the disciples took to rise out of the ashes. In which of these four areas do you most need work – and why?
 9. At the end of Sunday’s sermon, Jeff showed a video of a disabled puppy living with great exuberance, triumphing over his misfortune through the power of his inner spirit. What did you see in that puppy that spoke to you? Are you living like that puppy? If not, why not?