



Sermon Discussion Questions
04-19-26

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Sermon Series: 40 Days of Easter
Week 2: Half-Way In

1. ICE BREAKER: Dale shared a story about the famous explorers Lewis & Clark and the first time they caught a glimpse of the Rocky Mountains. For today's ice breaker, share whether you are more of a "beach person" or a "mountain person."
2. Read our Scripture for this week–

Matthew 28:1-10:

¹After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

²There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

⁵The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

⁸ So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

John 20:19-23:

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

What stands out to you as you read these events of that first Easter Sunday? What questions do you have? What emotions do you find in these accounts?

3. Sometimes people think that becoming a Christian should make your life easier, but often it gets harder first, as sanctification begins in us. In John 16:33, Jesus says, *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

Define the word sanctification. Do Jesus' words make you feel better or worse? Why? How have you seen choosing Jesus affect your life?

4. In both of these Scripture narratives, we see that both the women and the Twelve are feeling afraid. Fear in our lives can serve an important purpose - as an internal warning cry of nearby danger - but also can keep us frozen and hiding.

Why were the women and the Twelve so afraid? Do you feel that you most often experience healthy or unhealthy fear? How have you seen fear play an important role in your life?

5. Read John 20:19 again. The Scripture says that the disciples were locked in a room because of their fear. The struggle was real! But Pastor Dale said fear is the most common enemy to any worthwhile advancement.

Do you agree that fear is the most common enemy in your life? If not, what is it for you? What are some other things that can get in the way of the progress that you want to see in your life with God?

6. One author writes, "Fear is the darkroom where negatives are developed."

Discuss this quote. What does this mean to you? What are negative effects of fear you have seen in your own life?

7. Reread John 20:21. First, we see that the presence of Christ brings peace. Jesus showing up to the disciples was enough to bring peace to them. Read Philippians 4:6-7.

How have you experienced the peace of Christ? Do you have any faith practices that help you to access the Christ peace offers? If so, what are they?

8. Read John 20:22. Then, we see that the presence of Christ brings power. Jesus breathes on the disciples and gives them the Holy Spirit. Read Romans 15:13 - the theme verse of Community of Hope!

What does it mean to you that the presence of Christ can bring power? What do you need power over right now? How can you access more of the Holy Spirit in your own time with God?

9. PRACTICE: There are often times in our lives where we don't have words to pray, but we can simply say the name of Jesus over those situations, or those people, and trust that He will come into our fear.

Identify in your life the area where it feels like you're "half-way in," and simply spend a few moments saying the name Jesus over that area.

Share with your group what it felt like to simply pray the name of Jesus.