

Easter: Sharing God's Grace **April 12, 2020**

Overarching theme: In 2020, FUMC will be a **Go** church!

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point:

The past is the past. There is nothing that can be done about it. The past can only be used to gain wisdom for the future. What can change is the future. When we, as God's people, are willing to follow God in our daily lives, God will make a good way in the future. The way may be bumpy at times and have curves, but the process will be filled with God's love and grace.

Start point:

Lent 2020, the period of 40 days before Easter (excluding Sundays), begins on Ash Wednesday, February 26, and ends at sundown on the Saturday, April 11, before Easter. The penitential season of Lent is a season of the church year which commemorates the forty days Jesus fasted and prayed in the wilderness before he began his public ministry.

On this Sunday of April 12th, 2020, lent has now passed and we have entered the celebration of Easter. Today is Resurrection Sunday! We celebrate the risen Christ who on Friday was crucified to his death, but on Sunday, God had raised him to new life and sat him on the right side of the Father in heaven. Today we celebrate God's grace and mercy, not only in the life of Christ, but in our lives for what God has done for us. God has given us a way of forgiveness through Christ for our sins, and a new life in peaceful fellowship by God's grace. We get to live into the power of this new life by the guidance of God's Holy Spirit.

Book of John:

The Gospel of John was the last narrative written out of the four Gospels, sometime after 70 A.D. and before 90 A.D. The Gospel narratives were probably written to help people remember the story from actual witnesses. Most likely, decades after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the stories about Jesus had morphed into half-truths. Each Gospel had many similar stories but with a unique perspective from the eye witness. The Gospel of John emphasized Jesus as the Christ and Son of God. The people that received this writing were Christians who were struggling with the influence of the Jews who did not see Jesus as the Christ.

So, the writer was encouraging them to see Jesus as the divine one who came from God the Father. The first chapter highlights the idea that Jesus was preexistent (verses 1:1-14). Through the whole Gospel of John, Jesus is referred to as the divine one.

Reflect on this Scripture:

John 20:1-18 (NIV)

¹ Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ² So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" ³ So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴ Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷ as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. ⁸ Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹ (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) ¹⁰ Then the disciples went back to where they were staying. ¹¹ Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. ¹³ They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." ¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher"). ¹⁷ Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

Questions to ponder about the passages:

What jumps out at you from this passage?

So, bottom line, what is happening in this story?

Who was the first to give the word of Jesus' resurrection?

Who was next to be told?

How did God work in the story in relationship to Mary's grief?

How do think the disciples emotionally and mentally responded to the news?

Where was Jesus in the story, and where was he going?

Commentary:

What a roller coaster ride of emotion during the passion week of Christ. We started with Palm Sunday and the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. We read of the crowd that hailed him. Thursday, Jesus told the disciples of his coming betrayal by one of their own. That Thursday, the plan was executed and Jesus was arrested and went to trial. Jesus was condemned to death on a cross and was beaten for doing no wrong. Friday, Jesus was crucified to his death and prepared for burial. Jesus was laid in a sealed tomb. But on Sunday, Jesus was alive and Mary saw him. Jesus was resurrected, just as he said would happen. Time to move from grief to celebration for the work of God in our world. Like Jesus we die, and we give ourselves over to God, so that we can die from our self-centeredness and sin. Jesus died for our sin, when he had no sin, so that the price was paid for sin, and our reconciliation with God through Christ was made complete. You see, sin separates us from God. Like Jesus, we are raised out of our death to newness of life. We are resurrected out of our sinfulness into a life of reconciliation and grace that is to be demonstrated by us into a world that needs it. In Christ, we become a people of peace, demonstrating forgiveness because we have been forgiven.

I like what Tom said in his sermon,
"If you don't hear anything else in this sermon this morning, hear this.
Easter means that our past, our sin, our failures, our weak moments, our limitations, our challenges, this virus or any virus, even the last challenge that any of us will face, death itself, none of these ever have the last word.

Because Christ is risen indeed, when all is said and done,

+Life overcomes death.

+Love overcomes hate.

+hope overcomes despair.

+Forgiveness overcomes sin.

+Healing overcome brokenness.

And while I like chocolate,
when I say Happy Easter, it is not because I get to eat chocolate today.
I can say Happy Easter because **Christ the Lord is Risen today!**
And, made like him, like him we rise!
I hope that you hear the good news this morning...
that **he calls you by name into his LIFE, his LOVE, his HOPE, his RESURRECTION!**"

From me to you--

So, celebrate the day and the life!

Questions to Ponder for accountability in the group:

In this passage, what is the main lesson you get from it?

How do you react to the passion week of Christ?

How does resurrection Sunday, or Easter Sunday, make you feel?

Have you given yourself up to God and died to your self-centeredness and sin?

Have you given yourself over to God so your life can be renewed?

How do you demonstrate to the world the forgiveness and reconciliation that you have received from God?

What do you need to focus on that gives you life in a godly way?

Activity of for the life of a disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMC.

2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week:

John 20:17 (NIV)

17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

3. How do you hold Jesus down, or back in your own life?