Springfield Presbyterian Church

April 9th, 2023

Who Are You Looking For?

Easter Sunday

1. Introduction

I wonder if every pastor looks at their computer screen for a

while with a blank document on their desktop. If so, I think it is for a good reason – how do you adequately sum up this good news, if not great news about the resurrection, and tie it up neatly in a bow? The wise pastor knows that’s an impossible task, but I think it is fair to offer the disclaimer that any sermon will skim the surface of the amazing news from the tomb.

So for today, I’m taking a bit of a different approach – I have three things I want to talk to you about today and I’d like you to write them down and take them home. First, our Lenten series has looked at what it means to seek God and for God to seek us – so, I ask, whom are you seeking as you meet the resurrected Christ? Second, we see that the veil is lifted for Mary, so I ask you, what veils need to be lifted for us to see Jesus in the here and now? And third, Easter is not just for today – so how do you live differently because of the resurrection and embody Easter all year long? We’ll dig deeper into each of those questions, but that gives us a good framework as we press ahead.

1. Who Are You Looking For?

Who are you looking for? That is the question this week. During

Lent, we’ve asked many questions. Here’s a few: “Who will you listen to?”, “How do we begin again?”, “Where are you headed?” in an effort to follow this larger theme of seeking Christ this season. Now, on this Easter Sunday, all of our questions culminate in this moment as we think about the Jesus we hope to find and have been looking for this Lent.

As Mary stands at the tomb, she doesn’t see Jesus right away. In the Aramaic translation, Jesus says to her, “Why do you weep? And who do you want?” The last question is powerful – *who do you want?* Of all of stories of Jesus you have heard in your life – who do you want? Do you want the healer? Do you want the teacher? How does the image of Jesus you’ve had in your mind impact how you live? The question is the same for us: Who do you need?

Yet, maybe we need to see Jesus as all of these things and more – not merely as we want or even need him to be – but to see him in his fullness and wholeness. Can we see Jesus as fully human and fully God? Can we find the Jesus who loved us first, and from that space, are we ready to find what we are looking for? Are we ready to love Jesus with our whole heart?

1. Veils

As this question ruminates within you, I want to bring you to

another vital question – what are the veils that prevent you from seeing God? This might be a silly metaphor, but I remember the first time I put on glasses and laughed. I laughed because I did not realize that the world was blurry, and suddenly, everything was brought into focus. I was surprised, it brought joy, it gave me a new perspective and I no longer needed to squint to try and find what I was looking for. When I removed the glasses, I returned to the blurry world.

Mary, presumably, is wearing a physical veil representing her grief, but even beyond the physicality of it, there’s another veil that is initially preventing her from seeing Jesus. There are many different possibilities here – maybe she couldn’t see past her grief, or maybe she was caught up in other thoughts that she couldn’t recognize what was going on. I often worry that folks think Mary is not smart – how could she miss what was right before her eyes? But friends, we all have blinders when our grief is heavy and our love is wide – she’s in the right here. She can’t see the joy from her pain in that moment.

What are those things that keep you from seeing God alive in your world today? What veils need to be lifted – can you lift them yourself, or does something need to change for you to see God? What can help you find the God you’ve been looking for?

Let me move this idea from the academic and theological to the practical and tangible. Essentially, what are we saying needs to change to see God in the here and now? For me, I found that I had a lot of veils that need to be lifted. I need to get out of my comfort zone and read and hear stories that are not in line with my own perspective and upbringing to see God in new places. I need to slow down, which is not my skill set, and see God’s awe and beauty and see the ordinary as extraordinary. I need to make a constant effort to see God in all people, even when we disagree, and find a way towards unity.

Maybe that sounds more like a to-do list – perhaps it is. The reality is, Jesus came into this world and on this resurrection morning, we cannot passively stand by and simply accept it. Yes, we celebrate, yes we shout alleluia because we’ve been longing to do that for weeks now, but Easter requires reciprocation. Easter requires something to change within you and me.

1. Embodying Love

So, how do we live differently? We’ve summed some of that up

in the last question we explored, but how do we actively embody Easter? How do we see Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection as part of a call of discipleship? Easter must not only make our hearts glad, but it needs to move our feet too.

So, how will you lift that veil and be a sign of Easter, or of the wholeness and love of Jesus, in your everyday life? How has this resurrection moment changed you?

For me, it does mean doing the work of removing the veil. It also means that I embody a life that claims that love always has the last word. One of the biting moments, even on Maundy Thursday, even as we hear the stories of the crucifixion, is having the awareness that death cannot and will not win. It will feel that way, it will seem that way – but love will always arise, a new day will always dawn, and evil and harm may leave scars, but healing is waiting to rush in the door.

So, take heart – there is great news, not only good news – that Jesus Christ not only lived a beautiful ministry we are called to emulate, he not only died a death that we could not die ourselves, but he is now resurrection in full and beauty glory. I can’t think of better news. There is nothing sweeter than that.

1. Where do we go from here?

So, as you meditate on these questions in the next days and

weeks, I leave you with this statement that God is always seeking you. Yes, I hope you always are seeking God, but God is always looking with love for you, seeking you out, showing you love, and calling you beloved.

I know the questions we’ve asked this morning cannot be answered in a day or a week or a month or a year. This is an embodiment, this is active discipleship – the hard and beautiful reality is, the Easter journey is not over this morning. It’s just beginning. It never ends. My prayer for you is that you let the Spirit of God continue to do this good work within you, today and forevermore. Alleluia. Amen.