

- We celebrate today all over the world, even in the midst of this pandemic and restricted in our movements because of the significance of this day. The day that changed everything.
- I am going to read from Matthew 28 this morning.

*Matthew 28:1 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. 2 There 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. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. 4 The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. 5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7 Then 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."*

- I don't know what kind of Jesus you grew up with, but I am realizing more and more that Jesus was a disturber. He was not passive.
  - Many of you probably saw (or even have) pictures of a serene Jesus praying, holding a lamb, usually with a glow around him.
  - We have, too often, come to believe that Jesus is tame.
- By tame, I mean under control. Understandable. In my corner to help me. Loving and caring and wanting to sit by me. Nice.
  - The problem is that this can create an issue when life isn't tame. When things are out-of-control. When life is chaotic, tumultuous, crazy, uncertain and we are worried, fearful or just also out-of-control.
  - The more I read the Easter story, the more I see that Jesus was not tame. He stirred things up. He challenged. He made people uncomfortable. He exercised power. He got excited. He is still going this today. He is still stirring us up. Disturbing our lives and our dreams. Not leaving us comfortable.
  - Not because he delights in discomfort or problems. No, the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus demonstrates that **God disturbs our dreams to lead us into better ones.**
  - When dreams are broken or our expectations of God and life are not met, there are a variety of responses.
  - What becomes apparent throughout the entire narrative of Jesus death, is that everyone had a dream that Jesus was disturbing. He was messing up what they thought they wanted and what they believed was best.

## **I. When Jesus doesn't help our dreams, the tendency is to protect.**

- If you look at the main players in the Easter narrative, you see four different responses to broken and shattered dreams and expectations.

### **A. Reject and betray Jesus (Judas).**

- Judas is the first one who comes to mind.
- Judas followed Jesus, just like the other disciples, for the better part of three years.
- He participated in what Jesus was doing.

- We know from John that he was the treasurer of their little group. He managed the money and used to skim off the top for himself.
- Like the other disciples, he saw Jesus rise to prominence as an opportunity to get ahead. To make some money. To get influence.
- Jesus had begun to talk about dying. This was not the talk of a Messiah. The final straw was when a woman came and used up a hugely expensive jar of perfume to anoint Jesus. Jesus not only did not rebuke her, but praised her as preparing him for death and burial.
- These were not the words and actions of a Messiah – so Judas abandoned ship and decided to salvage what he could be selling Jesus out for 30 pieces of silver.

#### **B. Abandon Jesus (the disciples).**

- The rest of the disciples were in the same boat.
- They had walked with Jesus, suffered with Jesus, been taught by Jesus.
- They thought good things were going. They thought that maybe Jesus was actually the Messiah, the Savior. They had visions of their influence, of sitting at his right and left hand.
- They saw themselves as doing good, as being leaders of the people alongside Jesus.
- But instead of acting like a conqueror and Messiah, Jesus let kids sit in his lap. He touched lepers and prostitutes. He washed their feet at dinner. He consorted with sinners and non-Jews.
- These were not the words and actions of one who could help them reach their dreams. And when he allowed himself to be arrested in the garden of Gethsemane: “Then everyone left him and ran away.”

#### **C. Attack Jesus (the religious leaders).**

- The Pharisees and other leaders were the keepers of religion in Israel.
- They read and studied the ancient prophecies. They trusted and believed in God. They believed that God was going to bring Israel back to prominence like he promised. They believed that he would send a Messiah to deliver them. They pictured another David, someone powerful in word and deed, who would lead the nation back to independence.
- So they investigated anyone who might be like that. They thought John the Baptist might be the Messiah because of his popularity and words, but he denied it.
- Then they heard about this rabbi who had crowds following him, who was doing supernatural miracles and was one that people hung on every word he taught.
- So they investigated. He resisted their attempts to pigeonhole him. Instead of talking about throwing off the Romans, he preached about turning the other cheek. Instead of speaking words of power and authority, he said that the meek and humble are blessed. Instead of seeking out the religious elite, the knowledgeable, he had disciples who were nobodies and hung out with tax collectors, sinners and went to parties.
- These could not be the words or actions of a Messiah, and yet he was threatening their dreams, their hopes and even their livelihoods. So they schemed, plotted, arrested Jesus and had him put to death.

#### **D. Dismiss Jesus with skepticism and scorn (the crowds).**

- For a while, the people were all about Jesus.
- They had never heard anyone speak like him with authority.
- They had never encountered someone who could heal lame people, bring back sight and hearing, cast out demons, calm the storms, or feed multitudes with almost nothing.
- They saw Jesus as the solution to problems. His teachings made them feel good even while he challenged them. He met their physical needs.

- If he would step up and declare himself to be king, his influence would grow. It would spread. They would be able to live in freedom with their families, having their needs met and stomachs full.
- But then Jesus began to withdraw from the crowds. He did not go or do what they wanted or expected. He told them that to follow him was to deny themselves, to sacrifice what was most important for him, and to pick up their cross to follow him.
- Whoa, that was not the actions or words of someone who could give them what they wanted. If he wasn't going to live up to their expectations, then we'll just see what we will see. Then what should I do with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them. "Crucify him!" the crowd shouted. "Why? What wrong has he done?" asked Pilate. But they shouted even louder, "Crucify him!"
- And so they did. And on Sunday morning, 2000 years ago, there was no hope, no expectation, the dreams people had were dead. For small, it was a small dream lost. For others, it was their whole life. For some, it was a hope that had been dashed and they could go back to their real dream their way.
- Our responses really have not changed.
- What are your dreams? What dreams have been shattered, postponed or have gone by the wayside?
- What do you wish Jesus would do for you and your family and friends that have not happened?
- Dreams for financial security. For influence. For stability in family and relationships. For a job that isn't miserable. To have a job. To wake up healthy. To see your kids follow God. For your marriage to improve. For protection from the virus. To have that vacation that was canceled. To get out of depression or have someone you love get out of it. To have that person back you begged for God to keep alive.
- We hope, we wish, we pray, we ask, we expect.
- And when it isn't or hasn't happened, how have you responded?
- Reject Jesus and God and take control of your life. "God isn't helping so I am going to help myself. I don't need him, church or religion. I am going to do my best, get what I can, and make sure I look out for me and those around me."
- Maybe you haven't betrayed what you used to believe, but you have walked (or ran) away. Abandoned God or his church. You are sad about what you've lost but you don't trust God or his people any longer. "The words sound good, but I have been hurt, disillusioned too often. I don't trust him any more."
- Perhaps you have gotten angry. You decided God doesn't exist. Jesus doesn't matter. The world is too messed up and proves there is no loving God. "He obviously doesn't care about me, so I don't care about him. I wish he would leave me alone and I wish other people would stop talking about it. It's just a bunch of fairy tales for people who need something to believe in. I know what's true, and that isn't."
- Or maybe your broken dreams have left you in a permanent land of skepticism and scorn. You can't understand those who believe, even though you hope there is something more. "I am living life the best I can and I'm not I desire or want to upset my own dreams enough to rely on someone that I am not sure is there or cares."
- That's where the followers of Jesus were. But then Sunday morning happened and it all changed.
- You see, when our dreams, many of which are good dreams, great dreams even, do not happen or are damaged or lost, we hunker down to protect. We hate being disappointed or frustrated. But **God disturbs our dreams to lead us into better ones.**

## II. God's dreams are bigger and better.

- That Sunday morning so long ago, none of the people, even those closest to him, believed that Jesus had a bigger plan. No one believed he would be alive again. No one believed that the end result of all this was going to be good.
- They were not waiting at the tomb for Jesus to come back. They were sorrowful, scared and confused.
- Then Jesus rose from the dead. The only one to ever have come back from the dead to live forever. And he appeared to some women first, then to a couple of traveling disciples. Then to the rest of the disciples. They to Thomas who missed the first time. They to more and more people.
- They were so broken and disillusioned that it took all those appearances to come to grips with the fact that he was alive. He chided them for their unbelief but was gracious enough to meet them where they were.
- "Trust me!" he told them. I have been telling you there is a plan. It is bigger and more amazing in scope than you could have ever imagined. My death and resurrection changed the history of our planet. It opened up a way to know God personally. It gave us the opportunity to be assured of heaven. It opened the way for you to have me walk with you through every circumstance in life and experience joy, healing and blessing.
- The followers of Jesus had no frame of reference for this better dream.
  
- The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the ultimate hope.
- Hope that while we might not always have the answers for why the things go the way they do in this life.
- Hope that even when we don't know the reason for a pandemic, loss of a job or other issues.
- Hope that when we look at this life and how it goes, Jesus has a plan that is bigger and better. He is working. He understands. He feels. He not only gets you but he is wholly and fully invested in you.
- **God disturbs our dreams to lead us into better ones.**
- You may not see it. You may not understand it. But God proved his trustworthiness in allowing his own son to die in your place. To suffer excruciatingly so that you get to participate in his kingdom.
- So his invitation this morning is to believe. Not just to believe that God exists, or that Jesus lived or even that the events of the bible are true.
- But to believe that he has a plan. That he is inviting you to lean in a trust him. Believe him enough to behave, act and speak as though this is true even when you don't see it.
- Let **God disturb your current dreams to lead you into better ones.**
- Jesus' best friend John wrote it this way.  
*John 20:31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*
- May the resurrection of Jesus spur you to trust him and have . . . life!