

May 19, 2024 - Jesus After the Resurrection **Pentecost**

Scripture Passage: Acts 2:1-21

See also: Joel 2:28-32, John 20:19-31

1. On a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being “absolutely not,” to 10 being “fully aware”), how familiar are you with the Jewish festival called Pentecost?
2. Pentecost is a Jewish festival associated with the “feast of harvest,” or “feast of ingathering.” Why did God choose this Jewish festival to be associated with the giving of the Holy Spirit?
3. For Christians, we associate Pentecost with the birthday of the church universal. Why? A clue is found in (Acts 2:1-21). Can you locate that clue?
4. Discuss the transformation that took place in the disciples from fearful individuals to bold proclaimers of the Gospel after receiving the Holy Spirit. What does this transformation look like in our lives today?
5. Does this account of the giving of the Holy Spirit inspire you in your faith journey? If so, how?

6. In what ways does the Pentecost story challenge us to step out of our comfort zones and engage with people from different cultures and backgrounds?

7. So often we associate the Holy Spirit with a feeling, but the Holy Spirit may or may not evoke feelings. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. How does the Holy Spirit desire to play a more active role in our lives? In our congregation? In the world?

8. Discuss the concept of unity amidst diversity within the early Christian community following Pentecost. In a world that is conflicted over many things, how can we strive for unity in our church and community?

May 12, 2024 - Jesus After the Resurrection

The Ascension

Scripture Passage: Luke 24:44-53

See also: Acts 1:6-11; Ephesians 1:17-23;

Colossians 3:1-4

1. On a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being “absolutely never,” to 10 being “all the time”) how much do you reflect on the ascension of Jesus? How important to your faith is the ascension?
2. Before Jesus ascends into heaven, he gives his followers instructions. Notice what he tells them. How does his ascension confirm or punctuate his instructions?
3. Versions of the ascension story are found in Luke and—in Luke’s second volume—the book of Acts. Take a glance at both versions. What differences and similarities do you see?
4. In the letters of Ephesians and Colossians, we find some practical instruction for our lives based on the ascension. Ephesians 1:20 says, “God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.” The writer prays that the Ephesians would know “the immeasurable greatness of his power for

us who believe” (Eph 1:19). How do we recognize the power of God in our lives?

5. Colossians 3:1-2 says, “Seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth...” What does it mean to seek—and set our minds on—things that are above?
6. The next two paragraphs of Colossians 3 give examples of what to get rid of and what to clothe ourselves with. Look at some examples mentioned here. What things stand out to you?

Going deeper

7. How well do you think local churches help people “seek the things that are above”? What is needed to set this as a goal in our lives?
8. How does the reality of the ascension help us to trust Jesus?

May 5, 2024 - Jesus After the Resurrection

Walk to Emmaus

Scripture Passage: Luke 24:13-35

1. Reflecting on the journey to Emmaus, have you ever experienced a time when you were unaware of God's presence, only to later realize He was walking with you all along?
2. In the story, Jesus reveals himself through the breaking of bread. How does this act symbolize the importance of communion and fellowship in our spiritual lives?
3. The disciples' eyes were opened to recognize Jesus in the breaking of bread. What are some spiritual practices that can help us see and experience God's presence more clearly in our everyday lives?
4. Discuss the disciples' reaction upon recognizing Jesus. How does encountering Jesus transform our perspective, understanding, and response to life's challenges and uncertainties?
5. The disciples' hearts burned within them as Jesus explained the Scriptures. How does studying and reflecting on God's Word ignite our passion for him and deepen our relationship with him?

6. How can we cultivate a habit of studying Scripture together as a community?

Going Deeper

7. Explore the theme of hospitality in the story of the “Walk to Emmaus.” How does this act of welcoming strangers and sharing meals with others create opportunities for spiritual connection and transformation?

8. What are some practical ways we can share our faith and invite others into a relationship with Jesus?

April 28, 2024 - Jesus After the Resurrection

Jesus' Breakfast on the Beach

Scripture Passage: John 21:1-19

1. Our passage this week is another famous meal story with the resurrected Jesus. What similarities do you notice between this passage and Luke 24:34-45 from two weeks ago?
2. Are you a breakfast person? What is your favorite breakfast? Do you have a favorite breakfast memory?
3. Biblical scholars often suggest that John 21 was a later addition to the original manuscript of John. Some call it an "epilogue." As you read this passage, does it remind you of other stories from the life of Jesus? If so, which ones?
4. Many people find it amazing that—after all that had happened with the disciples—they went back to *fishing*. Why might they have wanted to go back to a place of familiarity?
5. Jesus gives the fishermen advice about catching fish, and it produces more fish than they ever imagined. How does Jesus bring abundance?

6. After breakfast, Jesus asks Peter three questions. Close readers of this text will recall that Peter previously denied Jesus three times. What significance do you see in Jesus asking Peter, “Do you love me?” three times?

Going Deeper

7. Have you ever returned to familiar surroundings or practices to bring a sense of stability in your life? What was the end result?
8. How important are miracles to your understanding of the faith? Do you *need* to see or experience miracles?
9. Jesus instructs Peter on what kind of death “would glorify God.” What kind of death do you think would bring glory to God?

April 21, 2024 - Jesus After the Resurrection

The Apostle Paul's Theology of the Resurrection

Scripture Passage: I Corinthians 15

1. How does Paul defend the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and why is it central to the Christian faith?
2. In what ways does Paul address the question of the nature of the resurrection body?
3. What significance does Paul give to Jesus being the "first fruits" of those who have fallen asleep?
4. How does Paul address skepticism about the resurrection?
5. How does the resurrection impact the way Christians should live their lives according to I Corinthians 15?
6. What practical implications does the resurrection have for believers regarding hope, suffering, and death?
7. How can believers today apply the teachings of I Corinthians 15 to their daily lives and their understanding of the Christian faith?

Going Deeper

8. How does the concept of “resurrection” in I Corinthians 15 contrast with other views of the afterlife prevalent in Paul’s time?

9. What role does the resurrection play in the broader theological framework of salvation according to Paul’s teachings in I Corinthians 15?

April 14, 2024 - Jesus After the Resurrection

“A Ghost Does Not Have Flesh and Blood”

Scripture Passage: Luke 24:34-45

1. What's the most memorable meal you have ever shared with a group of friends? What made it so memorable?
2. Luke 24 contains two stories of meals with Jesus. Why do you think Luke found it important to tell these stories?
3. Luke 24 also offers one of the few biblical descriptions of Jesus' physical body after the resurrection. What do you notice about Jesus in the text?
4. When the disciples recognize Jesus standing with them, they are afraid. This is not the first time Jesus did something that frightened them. How does Jesus respond to their fear?
5. Verse 41 says that Jesus appeared to the disciples, “While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering...” How does the Christian faith make room for *joy, wonder, and doubt*? Do these three things ever exist at the same time in your life?

6. Jesus asks his students for food to eat. They give him broiled fish. Some translations add that he also received honey. How does this scene compare to other stories of Jesus sharing meals?

7. After the meal, Jesus opens their minds to understand the scriptures in the law, the prophets, and the psalms. How does Jesus help us to understand the Bible? What difference does his presence make when we open the scriptures?

8. In Matthew's gospel, Jesus offers a glimpse of the final judgment and tells his followers, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat" (Matt 25:35). In Matthew's context, the disciples were "feeding Jesus" through their feeding of others who were hungry. How do these passages from Scripture inform how Christians feed the hungry today?

9. If Jesus physically stood next to you right now, what would he find in your heart? Would it be fear, unbelief, joy, or other things? Where is Jesus asking you to trust?

April 7, 2024 - Jesus After the Resurrection

After Jesus rose from the dead, he continued to teach and interact with people. This post-Easter series will be centered on those very teachings and interactions.

Doubting Thomas

Scripture Passage: John 20:19-31

1. How do you relate to Thomas's doubt in the story? Have you ever experienced doubt in your faith or beliefs?
2. Discuss Thomas's transformation from doubt to belief. What factors influenced his change of heart, and how can we apply these lessons in our lives?
3. Reflect on the role of evidence in faith. How much evidence do we need to believe, and where does faith come into play?
4. Consider the importance of community in overcoming doubt. How can we support and encourage each other in times of doubt and disbelief?
5. Explore the relationship between doubt and spiritual growth. Can doubt be a catalyst for deeper faith, and if so, how?
6. Reflect on Thomas' confession of faith ("My Lord and my God!"). What does this statement reveal about his

understanding of Jesus' identity, and how does it impact our understanding of Jesus today?

7. How can we cultivate a healthy approach to doubt in our spiritual journey? What practices or attitudes can help us navigate doubts without losing our faith?
8. Discuss the balance between skepticism and openness in faith. How can we maintain a critical mindset while remaining open to the possibility of encountering God?
9. Reflect on Jesus' response to Thomas' doubt: "Stop doubting and believe." What might this teach us about the relationship between doubt and trust in God?