

Living the Paschal Mystery Following Jesus to Resurrection

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Hi, Welcome to this talk. The title of this talk is 'The Paschal Mystery: 'Following Jesus To The Resurrection.' And I'm excited to dive into this with you today. Let's just start with a prayer, *In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen. Jesus we welcome you here. We ask that you would come with your truth with your light and with your healing. Holy Spirit, we just pray that you would stir in us the things that you desire us to know and the places that we need to open up to you to your healing hand. We pray all of this in Jesus name, Amen. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.*

Living the Paschal Mystery. This is so, so important, I think we need to start first with an understanding of what is the Paschal Mystery. The Paschal Mystery is the passion, death, resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus. One of the reasons why Jesus came to earth was to show us how to live. And we are invited to follow him throughout the scriptures. He is constantly inviting people, come follow me, come follow me. And that invitation wasn't just for those people 2000 years ago, but this is an invitation that he is giving to you and I today. Jesus is inviting us to come and follow him. And it deserves a response. The savior of the world, God, who created all things is inviting you personally into relationship and to follow him.

But how do we do that? How do we follow Jesus? What are the practicals of following Jesus? And what did he show us? What is the way? We hear things like Jesus saying, "***I am the way, the truth, and the life.***" Well, what is the way? what does it mean? This is the Paschal Mystery.

I think for many of us, our understanding of suffering has kind of, it needs some explanation and we have a beautiful theology in our church around suffering about redemptive suffering and offering our suffering for others and, out of love for Jesus and all of that is true and good. But somewhere along the line, it has become skewed for many of us into thinking that we are just called to suffer in this life and we just need to carry our cross, and that's it. Which leads to us coping, and believing, well, this is just as good as it's going to get. I know that I believe this for a long, long time. I grew up Catholic, I was involved in ministry. I went to Franciscan university, studied theology, and I had this belief. It wasn't maybe at the forefront of my mind, but subconsciously I just had this belief of like, while there's certain things that are just always going to be here that are always going to be

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suffering that are always going to be hard and painful, and I just have to cope with it. I just have to deal with it. And that's what I thought suffering was and how it worked. I didn't really know that God wants to come now, even on this side of heaven and raise us to new life, to have the dead places in us, be raised to new life.

There was a situation where, when I was two years into my marriage and everything just came crashing down, my husband confessed to me one day that he was struggling very deeply with an addiction to pornography. And it just shattered my whole world. Everything that I thought was true about our relationship just was completely shattered. There were so many lies and deceit and shame and everything that just broke open, that it was absolutely devastating. It was devastating for him too. This was a... a wound from a long, long time ago, that he was struggling with and his desire in telling me that day was that he could be free and not have to hide anymore. And it set us on this path of really pursuing restoration and healing. And I got to say, at the beginning I just thought, "Oh my gosh, "is this just what we're going to have to deal with "the rest of my marriage?" Like Lord, is this really what you had in mind for us?

And I remember one day in my prayer that I was just like weeping and coming before the Lord. And I felt God just gently speak in the stillness of my heart. And he asked me, "Heather, do you really want to experience new life here?" And I said, "Yes, Lord, I do. I need new life. I don't want the old life because it wasn't based on anything real." And he said, "if you want to experience new life, the only way to do that is through the cross. This is the path that I walked. Are you willing to follow me there, Heather, to the cross to die there so that you can experience new life?" And I said, "Yes."

Now what did that mean? Oh my gosh, this is an invitation to die. Many of us don't want to look at life that way we don't want to experience pain, but when Jesus died on the cross and he rose again, he showed us that nothing can hold him back, that nothing can hinder the new life that he has in store. He broke the power of death. He broke the power of suffering and he flipped everything on its head again, so that his suffering no longer was a sign of sadness and sorrow. But his suffering was the means for us to be in heaven with him forever. His resurrection and ascension, provided a way for us to be with him forever. He can make all things new.

This is what we're invited into. So, sometimes I think we believe that we carry our cross and we just carry it around in circles. And we tell one another about how heavy it is and how hard it is, where Jesus is inviting us. Will you come and follow me all the way up the hill, and die on this cross, so that you can experience new life? We need to go back to the scriptures to look at how did Jesus bring about

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restoration in people? What did this look like? And it truly is a deep encounter with the person of Jesus, to invite him into the places that are dark and difficult.

One of the stories I love is a story about the widow at Nain. And she had just lost everything. Her husband had already died and her son just died. So, back in those days, that means her status as a person, as a woman, was completely lost because it was dependent on those men in her life. And she was just filled with sorrow at the loss of her son. So there was a funeral procession basically, and she is there weeping, people are carrying this stretcher with her dead son on it. And there's a crowd of people. And Jesus enters into the scene and a crowd is following him.

You could imagine this scene where it is just filled with people and so many things, but Jesus just zeros in on this woman. And he sees her weeping and he goes to her and he says, "Don't cry." And I love the tenderness of God there. I love his tenderness where he sees her in her sorrow, in her pain. And he provides comfort for her. Jesus is so personal. He's so tender. He's so kind. He doesn't just see her, but he sees you. He sees me when we are suffering and we are when we are in pain. And we see this again, when Lazarus died and he sees Martha and Mary crying as well. He knows what this experience is like, Jesus himself wept. He knows what it's like to feel sadness, but he also has the power to heal and restore. So when he says to the woman, "Don't cry," he is saying to her, "Yes, I want to comfort you. "I see you in your sorrow." but he's also saying, "Don't cry because I have the power "to make all things new."

He walks over to her son and he puts his hand on him and he says, "Young man, get up." And the young man sits up in the stretcher and is raised from the dead. And you know what? We hear this stuff at mass at church, when we're reading the Bible and we can read that and go, "Oh yeah, and then the guy sat up." Could you imagine what that was like if that happened today and you were in a crowd of people and there is a funeral procession, and a man walked up and touched the person then they sat up and started talking? This is really what happened. These are not just stories in the Bible that we read as if it's a fairytale. This actually happened because Jesus is not just any other man. He is a savior and he has the power to heal and restore.

One of the other stories that I love about healing and restoration has to do with Peter. Peter, I love him in the Bible because he is such a real character. There's so many parts of him that I can relate to. And Peter, as we know, when he denied Jesus, that he denied knowing him and Jesus saw him. And there was this exchange where you could imagine Peter just felt such incredible shame. They were good friends. They were best friends. Peter was a follower of Jesus and he

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blew it at the most important time. And he said, "I will never, I will never, deny you Jesus." And here it was, it happened. And then Jesus died.

So Peter goes back to what he knows, which is fishing. He just goes back to the boat and he's out there. And if you've ever betrayed a friend in any way, or you've really messed up and hurt a friend, that feeling, then you can imagine the gravity of Peter's denial, the feeling of shame that he must have felt on that boat. Just wondering, why did I do this? And how could I betray my friend? I'm just the worst, I'm the worst. When he denied Jesus, he was around a charcoal fire. And people asked him, "Are you a follower?" "I think you're the one." And he just said, "No, I'm not." And he turned away.

So there he was on the boat and I love what happens next. Jesus shows up on the beach and Peter doesn't know that he's there. And Jesus says, "***Have you caught anything?***" He yells out to him? Well, he said this before, what Jesus is doing is he's recreating moments from Peter's past, from his memory, because he wants to restore and make all things new. Peter turns around and he sees it's Jesus. And he said, "It's the Lord." And he puts his clothes on and jumps in the water. And that's a funny little thing that he would put his clothes on to me that reminds me of Adam and Eve covering themselves. Peter was naked on the boat. He was fishing. He was just like completely stripped of everything. And he puts his clothes on to go back and encounter the Lord. And I think that that has to do with the covering of his shame.

So he swims back to the shore and it doesn't say this, but could you imagine knowing the heart of God that he is good and kind, and how much he loved Peter? I can't imagine that Jesus was standing on the shore with his arms folded, waiting for Peter to get there. I'm sure that he waited into the water. And as Peter swam with the heaviness of his robes and clothes that he was wearing, when he arrived, Jesus would have come out to meet him and just embraced him there in the water. It doesn't say that in the Bible. But that's what I imagine happened. Just knowing the heart of God.

Jesus brings Peter onto the shore and he's already started cooking breakfast for him. And he cooks it over a charcoal fire. There's only two charcoal fires mentioned in the Bible. One, is when Peter denies him. The second one is when Jesus restores Peter, you could just see that Jesus is setting the table for restoration. The smell of the charcoal fire. Just knowing us as human beings would have brought back all of the memories of what that night looked like. That horrible night, where Peter denied Jesus and he was suffering here. And this is a big part of our suffering. Sometimes can be sin. Sin in our life causes us to suffer, causes us to

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experience sometimes physical pain, emotional pain. It causes other people pain. It causes ourselves pain. It causes Jesus pain. And so here we see Jesus and the tenderness of his heart, where he feeds Peter with the fish. And then he asks him, "Peter, do you love me?" He gives Peter this opportunity. Two, at three times he denied him and Peter is able to restore and affirm his love for Jesus three times. And it's all around this charcoal fire.

I love this story because it's true. And it shows us the heart of God. But I think for many of us, it's a key. It's a key to going back into memories and inviting Jesus there. Jesus wants to go back into the places of our past, where we've experienced brokenness and pain and woundedness and where we are suffering. He wants to bring his presence there. He wants to go back into all of those places and speak the truth and bring his light. And we need to be willing to go there and to go there is like a death of sorts. It hurts, it's painful. It's painful to go into the past it's painful to go into the wounds, but Jesus is trying to invite us and say, "Don't cry, don't be afraid. I am the healer. I am the savior and I can make all things new."

I love those stories because they're true. And they teach us about the path that Jesus desires us to walk. If Jesus had just died on the cross and he stayed dead well, then he wouldn't be God, but he didn't. And we can't stop the story there. Even in our subconscious mind, we have to have the full picture. Jesus rose from the dead. He is a resurrected God. He is a person right now in heaven with a body, a resurrected body. And he desires the same for us in all of the places of our life, where we are suffering and have pain. He wants to make all things new. So we have to be willing to open up ourselves, to follow him, to experience the hardship, the pain, the suffering, and the death, so that we can rise again. And Jesus is going to be with us every step of the way.

And along that path, you may need to go to counseling and you may need to seek out people to journey with you because we are not meant to do this alone. We see that as Jesus carries his cross and Simon of Cyrene comes into help him as he falls and he can't carry his cross anymore. This is a similar thing that we can follow. You're not meant to do this alone. You're not meant to journey into healing alone. You need Simon of Cyrene to come alongside you to help you carry your cross. And I know for me, in my healing journey, it has taken a number of forms and it's taken a lot of honesty. It's taken a lot of personal growing itself, knowledge and understanding, and also being open to going to counseling and having spiritual directors and having friends come alongside me who are willing to help me carry my cross.

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And I say this as an encouragement to you, because God doesn't want you to just walk around in circles with your cross. He wants you to follow Him all the way. And we can experience that in our life. So let's just end with a prayer.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen. Lord, following you isn't easy, but it is what is going to bring the new life that we so desire. And you say that you will never leave us or abandoned us. So we ask that you would come right next to us Lord, in all the places where we are experiencing the most pain shame, struggle, hardship, the places where we may have physical illness, emotional hardship, mental illness, Lord you know these places in the scriptures it says, "That the dark is not dark for you "because you are the light of the world." So I ask that you would come with your light and your hope, and your restoration. And that you would take us by hand, back into the memories of pain and woundedness that we desire to heal. We thank you Lord. And we pray this in Jesus name, Amen. May God bless you.