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SERMON TITLE: **Jesus: The True Way to Life**

Walking as Disciples of Jesus Series

SCRIPTURE: **Matthew 28:1-20**

DATE: **April 12, 2020 Easter Sunday**

Online service at www.fpcd.org.

Before you read the sermon, READ Matthew 20:1-10. Online service at www.fpcd.org

What undergirds your life? What motto or belief or mantra do you live by? Do you live by what is popular in 2020? What drives your beliefs?

It is Easter. Christians know, "HE IS RISEN!" . . . You say, *He is risen indeed!*

That truth came at sunrise on Sunday morning. Jesus, the man who was crucified, ROSE from the dead! But there were many different reactions to that true event. How do you know the truth?

I am speaking to you by camera because our whole nation and the world has been ground to a halt by a horrible pandemic. You are sheltered at home while I am here in a largely empty sanctuary. The disease has caused the world to stop. Work has largely stopped. Movement has halted. Entertainment has ceased. Through these weeks and on this day of great celebration we have been given—or such has been forced on us—the opportunity to think; to review; to take an inside look at ourselves. Today is a gift of a day to think about *truth*. *What truth do you embrace?* **Jesus is risen. It's true. You heard it. Do you believe it?**

The night before his trial, Jesus said to the disciples, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

How can I know Jesus is the true way to life?

Several groups of people considered the truth after Jesus' crucifixion. Notice, they did not necessarily believe—or did they?

Here's Pilate's response:

The next day, (after the crucifixion) on the Sabbath, the leading priests and Pharisees went to see Pilate. They told him, "Sir, we remember what that deceiver once said while he was still alive: 'After three days I will rise from the dead.' So we request that you seal the tomb until the third day. This will prevent his disciples from coming and stealing his body and then telling everyone he was raised from the dead! If that happens, we'll be worse off than we were at first." Pilate replied, "Take guards and secure it the best you can." So they sealed the tomb and posted guards to protect it. (Mt 27:62-66)

Pilate secured the tomb. **What you believe is evidenced in how you respond to what you hear.**

The angel showed up. Jesus was declared raised. The tomb was empty. And the women left to tell the disciples.

The guards' response:

As the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and told the leading priests what had happened. A meeting with the elders was called, and they decided to give the soldiers a large bribe. They told the soldiers, "You must say, 'Jesus' disciples came during the night while we were sleeping, and they stole his body.' If the governor hears about it, we'll stand up for you so you won't get in trouble." So the guards accepted the bribe and said what they were told to say. Their story spread widely among the Jews, and they still tell it today. Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him -- but some of them doubted! (Mt 28:11-17).

What you believe is evidenced in how you respond to what you hear.

The Jewish leaders remembered Jesus' words but did not believe. They guarded against the possibility of the truth.

The women kept vigil for three days—at the cross, at the tomb, and in the garden. They were the first to see Jesus. The real, physical man Jesus, in body met them. He was alive! Good morning!" he said. That's all it took! They believed! They could not WAIT to tell the disciples.

Please note, for all of you who worry about whether women can preach-speak-report-proclaim. The Greek word for "go tell" means exactly that. If Jesus calls you to proclaim this good news, you better answer the call, whether you are a man or woman! There's no exclusion; there's no excuse. To whom do you speak? *All peoples—making disciples of them.*

Before the crucifixion Jesus had said, "No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again." Yet, "When he said these things, the people were again divided in their opinions about him" (Jn 10:18-19).

In our seeking of truth, we are often divided like the players in our story.

One group says, "We will be worse off." Another says, "Secure the area. Stop it from happening." Others "shake with fear

and fall in a dead faint.” Others “cover up truth with lies.” The others “stayed, didn’t hide,” and were given “deep wonder and inexpressible joy.” They “worshiped Jesus.”

What is your response? Don’t you want truth that cannot be twisted, that is real, that you can count on? Jesus’ resurrection supports real truth.

So let’s look now at Jesus as *the true way to life*.

Truth is solid, stable, not divided, not partly this and partly that, shifting as the sand. Truth grounds you regardless of circumstances. Truth provides a way to life.

Do you have difficult circumstances? Wouldn’t you like to be grounded at all times? The Bible says the truth is a Rock. Jesus is the true way to life.

But it takes faith. Even the disciples and women had to wait through the crucifixion, through the death, through two entire days without seeing. *Truth points beyond what you see*.

And yet, truth is embodied. For the Christian, it is not just a belief, it is a **living way**. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” It is not a virtue or an exhortation or a sermon or a principle. It is not being good or knowing the Bible. It is not a journey, a political system, or a program you follow. It is not a particular rationality or formula. **It is a person**.

A very bright and successful young man called himself a “young Atheist.” He had become an atheist for various reasons. He was well educated, a professor at a renowned university, understood rationalism and philosophy. He had studied world religions, including paganism. They were the “childhood of religion” to him; made up myths; undeveloped orgies, rituals, and prophetic dreams. He had also had a difficult childhood, losing his mother at age eight, and essentially losing his father, who subsequently shipped him off to boarding school. He lost his best friend who was killed while fighting next to him in a world war.

This man found himself searching for truth. He wasn’t sure he wanted to find it; but found himself desiring to interpret and orient his life.

He writes about a discussion he had one day: “The hardest boiled of all the atheists I ever knew sat in my room on the other side of the fire and remarked that the evidence for the historicity of the Gospels was really surprisingly good. ‘Rum thing,’ he went on. ‘All that stuff of Frazer’s about the Dying God. Rum thing. It almost looks as if it had really happened once.’”¹ That was the beginning of myth becoming the truth for him, summed up in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

He writes: “Idealism can be talked, and even felt; it cannot be lived.” His discovery was that Jesus wasn’t just a subject, like philosophy, but more than that, “*it was a way,*” **the way**. “Even if *my own* philosophy were true,” he says, “I always aimed at limited

liabilities.” . . . But with the real truth of Jesus, you could not limit it; “total surrender, the absolute leap in the dark, were demanded.”²

As he embraced the fact that Jesus is the true way to life, Jesus became “more concrete, more imminent, more compulsive. . . . It brings God near and nearer in a new way.”³ Have you ever focused a camera on infinity and what was near was fuzzy? But with Jesus, true life began coming into focus.

There is a real Truth out there that is worth your whole life because Jesus is truly alive.

“Good morning!” he said. He’s still saying it this morning.

Jesus is not *a way to follow*, as if there are many. He is *the true way to life*. Recently, I heard another man describe it like this. His name is Jim Edwards. He loves to climb mountains. One day he had the sudden opportunity to climb a very challenging mountain. He hired a guide and they set out for the summit that day. In his overconfidence, he failed to pack enough food and water. At the summit, he became faint. He could hardly stand in this unbalanced, disoriented state. Would he die right here, on this trek of a lifetime?

The guide needed to get him across a long ridge back to the lower path. So he said, “Put your arms around my waist, your forehead against my back, your feet right behind mine. Step each step with me. Don’t look anywhere else. Step by step, Jim gripping the guide, across the icy ridge they went until arriving at the stable, marked path below. The man became the way to life. That is the way that Jesus becomes your life—that unified, that close.

There is a need for faith; and faith involves risk. When Jesus died, the truth embodied in Jesus might have died. BUT loss and death are not the end with Jesus. **Life** is the destination when you take the true way of Jesus.

Do you want all of your sorrows, no matter how deep, to turn to joy? Cling to Jesus. **He is the way**. And when you take the risk of going on the true way, you’ll find him alive. How do you desire to respond this morning? This is what the entire Christian faith is about. Life is resurrection now—and forevermore.

HE IS RISEN!

AMEN

¹ C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, (Fontana Books: London, 1955), excerpts from p. 188f.

² *Ibid.*, 182.

³ *Ibid.*, 189.