

## **THEME: The Way: Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus**

### ***“Walking With Jesus Every Day”***

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber

April 6-7, 2013 at First United Methodist Church - Durango

#### **Luke 24: 28-34**

*28 By this time they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if he were going on, 29 but they begged him, “Stay the night with us, since it is getting late.” So he went home with them. 30 As they sat down to eat, he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them.*

*31 Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared!*

*32 They said to each other, “Didn’t our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?” 33 And within the hour they were on their way back to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven disciples and the others who had gathered with them, 34 who said, “The Lord has really risen! He appeared to Peter.”*

**VIDEO      Walking with Jesus Every Day Sermon Starter**

**SLIDE      Walking with Jesus Every Day (Use The Way background)**

Today we conclude our series of sermons on The Way: Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus. I invite you to take out of your bulletin your Message Notes and your Meditation Moments. The Message Notes have our Scripture passage listed at the top of them and then below that you will find some space to take notes and my hope is that you might hear something today that you would want to remember and you would write that down. On the backside you will find our Meditation Moments which is a way for you to spend some time reading the Scriptures each day in the morning or the evening and reflecting more deeply on what we are going to talk about today. You will find an opportunity to read some of the other post-resurrection stories that we find in the Bible and I think you'll find them fascinating and encouraging. You will read more about this story of the road to Emmaus and you will read the experiences of Paul and Lydia as they experienced the risen Lord and I hope in those experiences you will find that Christ comes to you.

In this story that we have before us today we find that there are two companions who knew Jesus and had experienced him in his earthly ministry and also witnessed his crucifixion, but not the resurrection. One of them is Cleopas and the other is unnamed. Some assume that this second companion is actually a woman because women are often unnamed in the first century when they are referred to in writings.

During this sermon series I have been taking you to some of the places in the Holy Land so we can see where these events took place. Today I want to take you four places. You see, there is not clarity over where the Emmaus named in this scripture is located so I'll take you to all four. Take out of your bulletin this map if you would.

**SLIDE          Map of Jerusalem in the Jesus Day (from Palm Sunday week)**

At the top you will find the map we looked at two weeks ago as we spent time on the final week of Jesus life. You will notice that out of Jerusalem there it road on the left of the map leading to Emmaus which was west. Below that map you will see a map of the Roman roads leading to the four different Emmaus sites.

**SLIDE          Roman Roads to Emmaus**

We'll begin with the ending: We may never know with certainty which of the four sites associated with "Emmaus" is the true site. Which one is the actual location where Jesus appeared to His disciples following His resurrection? The story in Luke 24 recounts how two of Jesus' disciples met Him while traveling. They were heading west from Jerusalem, to Emmaus. They spoke with the "stranger" for a while; only later, when they ate together, was Jesus' true identity revealed. Later, the two disciples headed back to Jerusalem.

The name "Emmaus" is a mispronunciation of the Hebrew word "Hammat," meaning hot springs, so the site must be near a natural spring. The distance is also crucial in identifying Emmaus. The disciples traveled in a single day from Jerusalem, to Emmaus, and back. Therefore, the biblical site of Emmaus needs to be within round-trip distance from Jerusalem. The distance in the Gospels is measured as "three-score furlongs" (Luke 24: 13), which is most commonly translated as approximately 60 "stadia," (an ancient Greek unit of length). However, there are discrepancies within the text; some translations state that the distance was 160 stadia. Depending on the translation, Emmaus can be anywhere from 7 to 18 miles away, one way or round trip.

Going on an "Emmaus" tour leads us to some fascinating sites for the Christian traveler. We start with the most famous and most widely accepted of the four sites - Emmaus Nicopolis, or its Arab name, Imwas, located on the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv road. It was the earliest site to be identified with the biblical Emmaus - in the 4th century AD - and this early identification strengthens the argument that this is the true site. Likewise, when Arabs settle in a village, they traditionally keep its original name, and the similarities between "Imwas" and "Emmaus" further bolster the claim. However, it is far from Jerusalem - a distance of 16 miles, making quite a tiring round trip journey for the disciples.

Emmaus is located in the famous Ayalon Valley, where the Israelite ruler Joshua commanded the sun and moon to stand still. Today, there is a monastery located at the site, in Latrun. Originally built as an inn for travelers on their way to Jerusalem, it is now inhabited by Trappist Monks, who sell the monastery's famous wine and honey.

**SLIDE        Latrun Monastery**

**SLIDE        Mosaic of Jesus and Emmaus Travelers**

You can also visit the ruins of the ancient city of Emmaus, including a Roman-Byzantine bathhouse and a basilica which would have been the focus of worship as they gathered in an area with an apse in the middle.

**SLIDE        Emmaus Roman Bathhouse**

**SLIDE        Emmaus Apse of the Basilica**

The next possible Emmaus is in Abu Ghosh, a Christian-Arab village located between Nicopolis and Jerusalem.

**SLIDE        Ruins at Abu Ghosh**

**SLIDE        Abu Ghosh**

This was one of the locations favored by the Crusaders as the resurrection site. Abu Ghosh is also identified as the ancient Kiryat Ye'arim, where the Ark of the Covenant rested for 20 years until King David brought it to Jerusalem. Today, one of the best-preserved Crusader churches is in Abu Ghosh.

**SLIDE        Crusader Church at Abu Ghosh**

**SLIDE        Crusader Church at Abu Ghosh Interior**

**SLIDE        Crusader Church at Abu Ghosh Interior 2**

Abu Ghosh is famous for something else. It has a gas station with two large statues of Elvis out front and has the second largest collection of Elvis memorabilia outside of Graceland!

**SLIDE Abu Ghosh Elvis**

Down the road you will find the Church of the Resurrection that was built atop Roman ruins and is now a Benedictine Monastery which can be visited.

**SLIDE The Church of Notre Dame de L'Arche de L'Alliance**

**SLIDE The Church of Notre Dame de L'Arche de L'Alliance Mary and Child**

The Church of Notre Dame de L'Arche de L'Alliance (Our Lady of the Ark of the Covenant) was built in the 1920s on the site of an ancient Byzantine church. A statue on the roof depicts the Virgin Mary carrying baby Jesus. On the Jewish holidays of Shavuot and Sukkoth, both churches hold spectacular music festivals. Abu Ghosh is also famous for its Middle Eastern cuisine, specifically hummus, and restaurants abound specializing in authentic regional delicacies.

**SLIDE Emmaus El-Qubeibeh**

The third "Emmaus" is in El-Qubeibeh, an Arab village, located west of Nebi Samwil. The Crusaders were the first to identify this as the Biblical site, after finding a nearby fort named Castellum Emmaus. They reasoned the name could mean only one thing - this was the site of the biblical Emmaus. In addition, the village lies approximately eight miles from Jerusalem - perfect day-trip distance. The Crusaders declared it "Emmaus" and built a church on top of the site; later, the Franciscan order, at the beginning of the 20th century, built a church atop those remains. The Franciscan church is still standing and can be visited today.

**SLIDE El-Qubeibeh Franciscan Church**

**SLIDE El-Qubeibeh Franciscan Church Interior**

**SLIDE El-Qubeibeh Franciscan Church Fresco**

You can see the fresco of Jesus with the travelers on the road to Emmaus behind the altar in this last photo. Archaeologists unearthed further remains dating from the Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine eras. One of those remains, possibly from Byzantine or Roman time, is identified by some scholars as the house of Cleopas, one of the two disciples.

**SLIDE House of Cleopas Ruins**

However, although the distance and archaeological remains seem to verify El-Kubeibeh as the correct site, the lateness of the identification (12th century AD) casts aspersions on its veracity; many conjecture that the Crusaders identified this as "Emmaus" in order to have a convenient stopping point for pilgrims to the Holy Land.

**SLIDE          Roman Road to Moza**

We move on to Moza, likely the "Motza" mentioned in the time of Joshua and again in the Jerusalem Talmud. You see what is left of the Roman road to Moza on the video screen that you can visit today. This is the closest of the four sites to Jerusalem, and there are Roman ruins visible. Moza's relationship to the resurrection is ambiguous; many conjecture that it was chosen as a possibility merely due to its close proximity to Jerusalem.

**SLIDE          Moza Excavations**

The ruins you see on the screen are of another house that some scholars believe may have belonged to Cleopas that are found in Moza. This site is the most likely candidate for Emmaus of the 4 in the opinion of many experts. Josephus (Jewish War 2.217) writes that Vespasian granted 800 discharged veterans of the Jewish revolt residential land in a place called Emmaus ("Ammaous") which is 30 stadia from Jerusalem. Eventually this came to be called "Colonia" and the name Emmaus was forgotten. There is nothing unusual about the fact that simultaneously another Emmaus (Nicopolis) existed 15 miles down the road. So it is very likely that Luke 24 is referring to this site. When he writes 60 stadia Luke means round trip.

**SLIDE          Mosaic of Jesus and the Emmaus Visitors**

Now that we have a sense of the location of these sites, let's turn to the story itself and what it might say to us today. Two of Jesus' disciples who are not part of the 12 but part of a larger group of followers, were walking on the road to Emmaus. On the way they were talking about what had happened to Jesus' body and about how sad they were that Jesus was dead. Their hearts were filled with grief.

A stranger came and walked alongside them and said, "What are you talking about?"

They said, "How can you not have heard? Jesus of Nazareth, who we

thought was the Messiah, was tortured and killed and now his body is gone and we don't know what they've done with it."

The stranger, with a smile and face, said, "Do you not understand? This is what the entire Bible talks about. From Moses to the prophets, they all foretell that the coming Messiah would have to suffer and die." He then opened up the Scriptures for them and I am assuming he spent a great deal of time in the book of Isaiah that day talking with them about the suffering of the Messiah.

They came to the town of Emmaus and they were so touched by his words they asked, "Would you join us for supper?" Assuming he was a rabbi they asked him to say the blessing.

So we took bread, he gave thanks to God, he blessed and broke it and suddenly their eyes were opened, and they saw that it was Jesus who was with them. Then Jesus vanished.

They ran back to Jerusalem and told the disciples, "We have seen Jesus! We have seen him! He's alive!" Peter said, "I have seen him too!" The woman said, "We have seen him too!" Over the next 40 days Jesus would appear again and again to as many as 500 of his followers at once before finally he ascended into heaven.

This is the biblical story of the resurrection of Jesus and what happened on that first Easter.

I can hear some of your ready. "That's a nice story pastor, but what does it really mean for me? How does that really affect our lives?" That is a very important question and that is what we want to consider on this weekend after Easter.

#### **SLIDE      What Does Easter Mean?**

It was only after his resurrection that the disciples really understood that Jesus was the Messiah. No one in the history of humanity had ever died and been raised from the dead.

The resurrection of Jesus was God's way of saying, "This is the one. He is the Messiah."

Most importantly, the resurrection of Jesus means that you too can be raised. His death means that we know there is life after death and resurrection from the grave.

A couple of years ago I was doing a graveside service for an older gentleman at Greenmount Cemetery. His son was there from out of town and he came to talk to me after the service.

He said, "I want to believe what you said. I want to believe that my dad is in heaven and that I will see him again. But how do you really know that? What is the proof?"

I told them that the proof is in the resurrection of Jesus from the grave. It is not only what the disciples believed but what they experienced. The apostle Paul said that Jesus was the "first fruits" of all who would rise from the dead.

Jesus himself said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, yet shall they live. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die."

The apostle Paul said that death and the grave has no more sting and death has been swallowed up in victory.

This tells us something most profound. God in Jesus has been victor over the dark places in your life. If Jesus is the victor over sin, if he is the victor over evil, if he is the victor over death, then he is the victor over the darkest things in your life.

This is like a pinprick of light shining in the dark valleys of your life. You may not feel Easter all the time when you're walking through the valley, but Easter provides that moment of light and that hope in the darkness.

Martin Luther, the great reformer, in one of his Easter sermons said:

**SLIDE**        ***Sometimes we don't feel Easter, we trust it even when we don't feel it. It is the truth.***

God will ultimately prevail. We are all going to walk through those dark times. What God has said is, "I have overcome them. This is not the end of the story. The dark Time is not the end, but there is something on the other side. I will prevail. There is something on the other side of death. There is something on the other side of despair. There is something on the other side of the dark place you're walking through right now."

God has a plan and a dream and he has all of creation in his hands. God is the victor.

**In the resurrection of Easter we have the victory of life over death, good over evil, Grace over sin, God over Satan, light over darkness and hope over despair.**

The overarching theme in the Scriptures is not that you will never experience difficult times. The overarching theme is that God will deliver you from those and that your life will not be defined by the darkness when you put your trust in Jesus Christ.

The writer of the Psalms puts it this way.

**SLIDE      *Weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning.***

The writer of the book of Lamentations is in the middle of the city of Jerusalem after it has been destroyed in 586 B.C. The Temple has been destroyed and the King has been led off in chains. Jeremiah is picking through the ruins of the city. This is the darkest moment in his life and he says this.

**SLIDE      *The thoughts of my affliction and my homelessness is wormwood in gall. My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me, but this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: the steadfast love of the Lord never fails. His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. Great is God's faithfulness.***

Your life may have been shrouded in darkness in the past, and it may be shrouded in darkness right now, and it certainly will be in the future at some point, but the resurrection is that pinprick of light that shines in saying, "This is not the end of the story. There is something more in store for you."

The book of Isaiah has this theme repeated over and over again. Chapters 1 through 39 of Isaiah talk about the sinfulness of the people. They talk about something everyone of us struggles with and that is our tendency to do what we don't want to do and to not do what we know we should do. We fail at that sometimes. We turn away from God and we hurt other people. There are many ways in which we bring pain upon ourselves by our brokenness. The first 39 chapters of Isaiah remind us of our brokenness and about how that sin separates us from God and from each other.

But then in Isaiah chapters 40 through 66 we see a shift. In between these two parts of Isaiah 200 years elapse. During that time the nation of Israel in the holy city of Jerusalem are destroyed. The people are carried off into exile in



the nation of Israel experiences their darkest moment. They are living in exile as slaves to the Babylonians and there in the midst of their darkness God speaks again in this second part of Isaiah.

God speaks a word of comfort and hope when he says through Isaiah the prophet:

**SLIDE**      ***Comfort, comfort my people says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem.***

**SLIDE**      ***They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not grow weary. They shall walk and not faint.***

God promises to deliver the people out of their valley of darkness and give them a homeland again. It is a wonderful promise that God makes it through the prophet Isaiah that he will deliver us from darkness, both the people in Isaiah's day and us in our day.

Isaiah also promises a coming Messiah that will deliver his people from sin and death. 500 years after the second part of Isaiah was written God would send Jesus as the Messiah which is promised.

But the book of Isaiah ends on the farther horizon. God promises to deliver all of us from this earth as we know it into a heavenly kingdom. This is what the Bible ultimately says—that life as we know it here will not go on forever. Our scientists say the same thing—that one day this planet will not exist because of the forces in the cosmos.

This is what the book of Isaiah says in chapter 65.

**SLIDE 17**      ***“Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth, and no one will even think about the old ones anymore. 18 Be glad; rejoice forever in my creation! And look! I will create Jerusalem as a place of happiness. Her people will be a source of joy. 19 I will rejoice over Jerusalem and delight in my people. And the sound of weeping and crying will be heard in it no more.***

I love that image of a new heaven and a new earth where there is no more weeping or crying. Doesn't that sound wonderful?

This is our final destiny, the ultimate victory of God. The final words of our rival speak of this same destiny in Revelation 21.

**SLIDE**      *1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. 2 And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."*

This is the final triumph of God.

**SLIDE**      **The final triumph of God.**

Jesus resurrection from the grave 2000 years ago was the first steps in that victory. It was a guarantee of the victory to come. Jesus rose from the grave triumphing over sin, over evil and over death.

In his resurrection, Jesus says that this is your future—a day will come where God will pronounce the final victory in all that we know. That is, dark will cease to exist, and we will be encompassed by God's amazing and glorious light.

What does this mean for our daily lives today?

When I was in high school one of our family traditions at Easter was to gather at my uncle and aunt's house for dinner. After dinner we would put away the dishes and get out the cards and play *Oh Heck*. It actually is not called *Oh Heck* but our grandmother made us call it that because the other word is not appropriate!

Anywhere from eight to 12 of us would play and it's very difficult to win at this game. One year we got to the very last hand and I was winning. All I had to do was win the very last trick and victory would be mine. The way this game works is you deal one card on the first hand and then as you go to the next hand its two cards and so on until you deal all the cards out and then you work your way back down until you are just dealing out one card per hand at the end.

We had gotten to the last hand and we each had one card. It was my lead and I had an ace of diamonds. I was pretty excited because I was pretty sure I was going to win. I put my ace down and the hand went all the way around until it got to my 80-year-old grandmother. So far I was winning the hand and then

with a wry smile she put down the two of hearts.

It looked like I had won until I realized that hearts were trump.

Do you know what trump is? Trump means that the suit wins every time. We could've put nothing but aces and Kings down but her two of trump wins.

**Easter is God's trump card.**

Just when you think evil has won. Just when all seems lost and there is no hope. When God himself seems dead on the cross—when God is buried in the tomb and the stone shut tight—this is when God plays the trump card.

When the two disciples were walking on the road thinking that there is no hope, Jesus shows up because he has risen and he has come to play the trump card.

I got a card from someone recently I have not seen in a number of years. I want to share with you.

*Dear Pastor Jeff,*

*Hi. My name is Jeanne and my daughter is Shawna. We went to your church when you served in Wheat Ridge. I hope you remember us. We went on a mission trip to southern Colorado and it was great.*

*Anyway, I'm writing because it's important to me that I let you know that I lost Shawna three years ago in a car accident. She was coming home from a soccer game. There was no negligence—the driver hit black ice. Her death was instant.*

*Please pray for her soul. This year will be the third anniversary of her death and its Easter.*

*I have a great church out here and my faith has made all the difference. Thank you. Sincerely yours Jeannie.*

My faith has made all the difference—but faith in what? We have faith in a God who overcomes evil—faith in a God who says they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles—faith in a God who sends a savior to deliver his people.

We have faith in a God who says, "The day will come when I will wipe away every tear from their eyes,"—faith in a God who sends Jesus who dies but is raised from the dead and who says, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those

who believe in me will never die."

We have faith in a God who has pronounced that victory over death and over the grave is certain because the resurrection of Jesus Christ—faith in a God who walks with us through the darkest valleys, even in the valley of the shadow of death.

This is the faith that can and will sustain us even through the darkest valleys.

People ask me from time to time, "Do you really believe this stuff? Do you really believe that Jesus rose from the dead? Do you really believe in the resurrection for us?"

When I got this card this last week about Shawna's death and what struck me? What struck me is how grateful I am that not only do I believe it, but I am counting on it—and you can too.

Would you bow in prayer with me?

#### **PRAYER**

*Oh God we give you thanks and praise that you walk with this through the darkest places—that you never leave us and you never forsake us—that you gave us promises that are amazing—that at the end of our lives and our existence there is something beyond—that there will be a new heaven and a new earth.*

*We are grateful God that in this life we recognize that you walk with us every day—even when we don't feel your presence is near. We remember how you sent your son Jesus to walk among us and to show us the way, the truth and the life—that through him you experienced those moments where we wonder if we have been forsaken by you.*

*Yet in his resurrection from the grave you triumphed over all the dark places and gave us a foretaste of what's to come. Help us to walk in that hope—to trust in his resurrection—and to live as resurrection people, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

# ***“Walking with Jesus Every Day”***

## **Theme: The Way: Walking In the Footsteps of Jesus**

**Scripture: Luke 24:28-34**

**Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon:**

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**Monday, April 8** – This week we will read about the different post-resurrection experiences of followers of Jesus, as well as some encounters with God in the Old Testament. Each one will offer points to ponder. We will start with those encounters experienced right after the resurrection. Read Luke 24:13-27. Emmaus was not a well-known spot. It was probably like some of the little towns in our region. The two men on the road seem to be trying to get away from the maddening crowd. As the Lord meets them, they are trying to make sense of what had just happened in Jerusalem. During their two or three hour walk, they do not recognize Jesus which is a key part of the story. How many times have we not recognized God's presence in our lives? The story reminds us that Christ may come to us disguised. Do we take enough time to retreat, allowing God to visit with us? Notice the interchange. They talk, Jesus listens. Jesus speaks they listen. Both listening and talking are important as we converse with God and others! If you are physically able, take time to walk. Invite a friend, if you'd like. Be bold...you might even share these scriptures and see how God is present during the walk!

**Tuesday, April 9** - Let's finish the Emmaus story today by reading Luke 24:28-35. We have intentionally given you less to read today, because these few verses offer to us an invitation to sit with the Lord. Do not hurry this time today...God is calling. As the three in the story shared an ordinary meal, Cleopas and his companion realized the extraordinary experience of having Christ with them. He then immediately vanished. Looking back they remembered their hearts being strangely warmed. Have you ever felt this way? Some call it an awakening. Ponder those experiences. Even now in this quiet time, relax and invite God intentionally into your space. You might read the scripture a couple of times, and then allow yourself to be open to God speaking. If you are sharing this time with someone, you might witness to each other God's work in your life, or just sit quietly together after reading. Another captivating post-resurrection meal sharing is found in

John 21:1-14. Notice here that Jesus offers them fish, along with some bread. For Jesus, the importance of sharing an ordinary meal cannot be overlooked. Consider the importance of mealtime.

**Wednesday, April 10** – Read Acts 9:1-19. This is the story of the conversion of Saul, later known as Paul, the great apostle. There are many things to note and ponder in this scripture. Does the light that flashed from heaven and three days of darkness seem familiar? A good rule of thumb for us in days of darkness is to wait three days. Many times, the light will return to the situation. Notice the faithfulness of Ananias, who participates with the conversion. Can you imagine hearing God with such clarity and being obedient? Lastly, the experience of having the scales fall from his eyes was not unlike that of Cleopas and his walking partner after their experience with Christ. The Greek word for this is *anagnorisis*, which means the opening of the eyes. Read Galatians 1:11-24 to read more about Paul's experience of having his eyes opened.

**Thursday, April 11** – Read Acts 16:6-15. This text speaks of the “Spirit of Jesus” giving instructions to Paul in his mission. Paul gives us the example of measuring our steps in accordance to God's leading. Verse 14 tells us that the Lord opened Lydia's heart. Post-resurrection encounters with Christ may not mean for us that we see with our eyes the physical presence of the risen Christ, yet we can realize his presence daily. Read Hebrews 11:1-3 which speak about the importance of faith. How does your faith give you the assurance of things you cannot see? End today in prayer, asking God to help you experience faith in a way that gives you assurance.

**Friday, April 12** – Read Genesis 28:10-17, Exodus 33:23, and Job 9:11. These great Bible stories make us aware that God's presence and voice is sometimes elusive and fleeting. Our own faithfulness in seeking connection with the risen Lord is paramount. Read Psalm 100 and 107, inviting Christ into your space, take time to meditate on these scriptures.

**Saturday, April 13** – Read Matthew 28: 16-20. The risen Jesus commissioned his followers to serve him by serving others: make disciples, baptize and teach. Having all authority from God, Jesus sent us to all nations, to teach all that he commanded. But we never go alone—he promised to be with us always. The message of Matthew's final passage is also found in Luke 24:36-49, Acts 1:3-8, and John 21:1-14. Then and now, in Brunner's words, “the church exists by mission as fire exists by burning.”

In Isaiah 43:10, the prophet quoted God as saying, “‘You are my witnesses,’ declares the LORD, ‘and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.’” Today, on the authority of the risen Jesus, this is your commission if you choose to accept it. Will you be a living witness to the risen Lord, sharing what you know of his love and life? As your life with Jesus unfolds, what do you want to ask of Jesus?

**Family Activity:** Gather your family into the darkest, smallest space in your home. (A closet or dark bathroom would be good options.) When you are all together, ask someone to tell about Jesus'

death on the cross and how He was buried in a dark tomb. (Refresh your memory by reading the story in Mark 15:21-47 before you gather in the dark.) Describe how just as the tomb was dark, our hearts and lives are dark without Jesus' light. Explain that Easter is when we rejoice that Jesus rose from the dead and brought light into our hearts and lives forever. Open the door of the room and celebrate the light of Jesus together! Thank God for Jesus and the light he brings to our lives!