

AFTERMATH- WEEK 5

The Disciples in the Upper Room

<< **Scripture Reading- Tiah Breuer**>>

Opening Conversation:

- Talk about fear. Fear drives us. Fear changes us. Fear controls us. My wife is terrified of spiders. You'll always know when one is close to her, and if she thinks there's a spider in a room, she won't go in that room. Jennifer will not cohabitate with a spider.

- But like Jennifer, fear has a way of consuming us. It has a way of changing us, of dictating our lives.

- **Sound Off: Let's talk about fear for a moment. What is something that you were afraid of as a child? Can you explain why? What difference did that make in your life?**
 - Jordon share about fear of the dark.
 - Fear of the unknown
 - Fear of unseeable dangers.
 - Fear of being alone.
 - Memories of blackouts in winter. Saving grace: our wood stove that gave flickers of comfort in the terror of night.
 - The light was safety. The light was salvation. The light was hope.
 - Sleeping in family room.

Many of us are terrified of the dark. Maybe not the literal dark. But for many of us, this season has reminded us at how dark the world around us is.

- Some of us try to disconnect so that we can avoid it.
- Some try to plug our ears and pretend it's not dark.

- Others convince ourselves that the dark is really light.

It's easy to look around at the world and see everything as wrong, everything as dark, everything is hopeless.

- We may be tempted to take cover, hide ourselves in upper rooms, where at least we have a little light.

Fear is a natural reaction to situations beyond our control. The closest followers of Jesus understood the feeling of darkness and fear:

- Jesus has been executed, betrayed by those closest to him.
- Unjustly tried, tortured, and executed.
- In a city that had just days earlier celebrated his arrival, his followers were terrified that they would be next.
- They hunted down Jesus and now they might come for them.

In John 20, we read about the first Easter, the story of Christ's triumphant resurrection. In one event, the world was changed. In one moment, a whole new world was born. In one an instant, nothing would ever be the same again.

- But the disciples didn't see it. They didn't understand.
- Even after Mary Magdalene reported her encounter with Jesus, they were still terrified.
- Perhaps they thought, "She's nuts. Dead people don't rise from the dead."
- Maybe they thought, "Even if Jesus is alive, they killed him once. What's to stop them from doing it again?"
- Perhaps they didn't think any of those things, and were so consumed by the threat of the Jewish leaders that they couldn't even see past their fear.

In John 20: 19, John writes: ***"That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders."***

- Huddled together, the disciples hid in an upper room with the doors locked, hoping nobody would find them.
 - All they knew was their fear.
 - All they could see was the darkness.
 - All they recognized was their powerlessness against their enemies.

- And so there they were, hidden away, locked behind closed doors, huddled together for support.

- This is where so many of us are right now. We are people who know fear. We are acquainted with it. Perhaps all we feel like we know is fear.
 - Maybe you look around at the world and you see the pain and devastation that COVID-19 has brought, and you know nothing but fear. The very idea of leaving your house is terrifying to you.
 - Perhaps you see some of the restrictions placed on us by our various government officials and you're afraid because you worry about the rise of tyranny in the midst of a pandemic.
 - Maybe you see how so many people are devolving into anger and distrust and negativity and toxicity and you despair because it feels like there is little left to hope in.
 - Maybe you look at your bank account and with each passing week you know that there's less and less to get you by.
 - Maybe you've had a rough quarantine with your spouse or significant other and you're afraid that once this is over, so is the relationship.
 - Perhaps you're worried that you the organization you're a part of, or perhaps even the one you lead will never recover from these last few months.

- Whatever it is that you're afraid of, trust me when I tell you, not only do I understand, but the closest followers of Jesus understand.
 - Their fear made it feel like they were living in darkness, that the

- sun had been blotted out, and that this was it for them.
- Their fear ruled them because Jesus was the only one giving them hope.

In fact, light and darkness had been a common theme of Jesus' ministry

- At the beginning of Jesus' teaching ministry, he moved to the region of Capernaum along the sea and began to bring the good news of the Kingdom of God. Matthew quotes from the prophet Isaiah and declares, "***The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow, a light has shined.***" (Matthew 4:16)
- Jesus himself used light as a prevailing metaphor in his ministry:
 - In John 8:12, he says, "***I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.***"
 - And in John 12:46, Jesus declares, "***I have come as a light to shine in this dark world, so that all who put their trust in me will no longer remain in the dark.***"
 - Using the metaphor as Jesus as "The Word," the author of John writes, "***God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone.***" (John 1:3-4).
- But now their lives were plunged into darkness. The light of the world had been extinguished. There was no hope left for them.
 - They were alone.
 - They were afraid.
 - They were desperate.

- But suddenly...

John 20:19-20: *“Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! ‘Peace be with you,’ he said. ²⁰ As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord!”*

Jesus had done the unthinkable, the unbelievable. Suddenly Jesus was there, as alive as they were...moreso even. Humans can't typically appear and disappear at will.

- Everything was different. It had to be.
- How could it not be? The light that came into the world was back. And even better, it appeared like he was indestructible. If death can't keep Jesus down, what can? The Romans could stop him from leaving the tomb. The Jewish leaders who had condemned him for falsely claiming to be the Messiah could hardly stand up to him now.
- **The disciples fear melted into joy. Their despair melted into hope. Their anxiety melted into peace.**

But Jesus wasn't through yet:

“Again he said, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.’ ²² Then he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.’”

- Jesus offered his disciples peace. In fact, he offered it twice.
 - But that wasn't all Jesus did.
 - Jesus gave them peace, but then offered a disruption.
 - He told them to be at peace, but the upper room wasn't their home anymore.
 - He gave them peace, but said you can't stay here.
 - He offers them peace but said, “Now you have something you

must do.”

- He extends peace to them, but then says, “I am sending you.”
- And he’s still doing that today.

Jesus still comes to bring light into our dark lives.

- He meets us in our dark upper rooms filled with fear.
- He meets us in our vulnerability, our limitations, our despair, and our grief.
- And he replaces our darkness with light.
- Remember the words of John in the introduction to his Gospel: ***“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.”***
- Jesus is in the business of replacing your darkness with light, of replacing your fear with hope, of replacing your anxiety with peace, of replacing your despair with joy.
- But he doesn’t give you light without a purpose.
- **Jesus doesn’t give you peace as an end in itself.**
- Jesus gives us light so that we can become light ourselves.

Jesus offers us peace and sends us out.

Jesus always begins with comfort, but then confronts us with his mission for us.

We are not commissioned to retreat into our buildings to form holy huddles and talk about the good old days. Jesus knew he was sending his followers into hostile territory, in to a world that would reject his followers, persecute them even.

He calls us to carry his light into a world languishing in darkness.

- And in his final commands, known collectively as the Great Commission, he gives us a mission to follow. Plainly and simply:
 - ***Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing***

them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19)

○ *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)*

○ The mission Jesus gave to his closest followers, his great commission, continues to resonate throughout the ages.

▪ It’s a mission without an end.

▪ It’s a mission that is always on the move, always expanding, always inviting us to step forward.

- Jesus invites us to carry his light.

○ Jesus lived a light-giving life. He brought light into the lives of people everywhere he went, illuminating into their darkness and inviting them to embrace the light that he offered.

○ Jesus demonstrated what it was like to live a light-filled life.

○ And he invites his followers to follow his pattern:

Matthew 5:14-16: *“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.*

- Jesus offers us his light, the light that dissipates the darkness, the light that illuminates, the light that brings safety, the light the transforms our hearts and minds.

○ **And he does it so that we can illuminate the darkness around us.**

- Story of flying to Vegas at night

○ Middle of the desert, sheer nothingness.

○ Flying into the airport, which is near the bright lights of the city

is shocking.

- For what feels like eternity, there is nothing.
- And suddenly...
 - The city is unmissable.
 - It's unmistakable.
 - It's disorientingly bright.

- Jesus invites us to reflect the light, to hold it up, to demonstrate it to all who come into contact with us.
- In the same way that lights of the city hit you with undeniable evidence of its source, **followers of Jesus are called to radiate Jesus undeniably.**
- Jesus tells us that the best way we radiate his light is in the way that we live. When people look at us, they should see Jesus. When we interact with those far from Jesus, they should be prompted to doubt their disbelief.
 - 1 Peter 2:11-12: *“Dear friends, I warn you as ‘temporary residents and foreigners’ to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. ¹² Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.*
 - When you live like Jesus, when you radiate his love and holiness, even those who attempt to falsely accuse you will be unable to deny it.
 - **It means living in such a way that people can't help but question their disbelief.**

Closing Challenge:

- Identify one person to whom you can tangibly show the love of Jesus. How can you do that? What does it look like?
 - Write their name down. Put it on a sticky note, enter it into a prominent place in your phone.
 - Maybe you need to pray to have God reveal that person to you. Maybe you already have somebody in mind.
 - Ask God to help you formulate a plan- don't leave it up to chance. You need to make a plan, with God's help.
- If you don't know what to do or how to act, maybe this will help:
- **Sound Off: Think of the one person in your life that was the most influential in leading you to faith. Who was that person? What did they do that drew you to Jesus? What actions did they take? What attitude did they have? How did they radiate Jesus?**
- God places these people in our lives to draw us to him, and he equips us and calls us to then go and do likewise.
- He has placed his light in our heart; he has given us the light of Jesus.

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.” (John 1:5).

- And he calls us together to illuminate our world.
- You may feel like the task is too great, that the darkness is too dark, but never underestimate the power of your light.
- **Because while one light may seem small, in the darkest night it shines the brightest.**

Together, we become a city on a hill that cannot be hidden. Together, we go out into our mission field and we radiate the love of Jesus. We live in

such a way that even those who set themselves against us can't deny our light.

And Jesus promises: *“And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

Against the power of these lights, the darkness retreats because the light shines in the darkness and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light.

So choose to stand in the light and radiate that light. Identify that one person and bring the light of Jesus into their world this week!