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BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH

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ELKHORN, NEBRASKA

PASTOR MARK FRY

1           We are going to look at the Easter Story from the  
2 Gospel of John. We are going to look at the Easter story  
3 from John 20.

4           What we are going to look at are these ten verses of  
5 the story and I want you to pay special attention to the  
6 motion and the emotion of the story and also the direction  
7 and the distance of the disciples.

8           So the motion and the emotion; the distance and the  
9 direction.

10          Those are going to be my bookends, my bookmarks, as  
11 I explore this text with you a little bit this morning. We  
12 begin in John 20, the first verse.

13          "Early on the first day of the week, while it was  
14 still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the  
15 stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran."

16          There is some of that motion.

17          "And she went to Simon Peter and the other disciple,  
18 the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken  
19 the Lord out of the tomb and we do not know where they have  
20 laid him."

21          "Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went  
22 toward the tomb.

23          "The two were running together, but the other  
24 disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

25          "He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings

1 lying there, but he did not go in."

2           There is that issue of distance there. Direction.

3           "Then Simon Peter came following him and went into  
4 the tomb.

5           "He saw the linen wrappings lying there and the  
6 cloth that had been on Jesus' head not lying with the linen  
7 wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.

8           "Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb  
9 first, also went in and he saw and believed; for as yet they  
10 did not understand the scripture that he must rise from the  
11 dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes."

12           Put your finger at that spot and we'll come back to  
13 that.

14           I don't know what type of emotion or motion they  
15 used when they went home.

16           It's kind of matter of fact, they just state it very  
17 obviously, they went home, ho-hum, another day, another  
18 Easter.

19           This is even the first Easter and all they are doing  
20 is going home.

21           The story gets real interesting after that point. I  
22 would invite you to consider reading it maybe later on in the  
23 day.

24           But what I want to do is I want to focus in again on  
25 the motion and the emotion and the distance and the direction

1 of all the disciples in the story today, because there are  
2 three of them.

3 There is Mary Magdalene, there is Peter, and there  
4 is this other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved.

5 So I want to look at the motion and the emotion, the  
6 direction and the distance of those three in comparison to  
7 ourselves.

8 And the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, is  
9 the one I want to zero in on.

10 Let's look closely at his story. We see him in  
11 Verse 2.

12 "So she," Mary Magdalene, "ran and went to Simon  
13 Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved."

14 We are going to trace and retrace his footsteps  
15 today.

16 It's kind of confusing that he doesn't have a name.  
17 We see he's referred to in the third person here.

18 And then we see again in the third verse, "Then  
19 Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the  
20 tomb.

21 "The two were running together, but the other  
22 disciple," that is the one other than Peter, "outran Peter  
23 and reached the tomb first.

24 "He," the other disciple, "bent down, but he didn't  
25 go in."

1           He probably got there first because he was younger,  
2 and he ran faster.

3           Peter is kind of a rock. He doesn't run very fast,  
4 so this other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, is quick of  
5 foot, and quick of faith.

6           But out of respect he waits for his elder, Peter.  
7 And so Peter goes in, this other disciple goes in, and it  
8 says very succinctly, Verse 8, "The other disciple, who  
9 reached the tomb first, also went in and he saw and  
10 believed."

11           But Peter didn't get it yet.

12           So they come out and then they just basically go  
13 home.

14           Motion and emotion; distance and direction.

15           We are going to retrace that other disciple. It's  
16 peculiar to me.

17           It reminds me a little bit of a Seinfeld episode  
18 when that guy named Jimmie talks about himself in the third  
19 person.

20           Remember? "Jimmie is getting upset."

21           And then George starts doing it, "George is getting  
22 upset."

23           "George is hungry."

24           But the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved,  
25 this third person disciple is kind of a curious guy, so let's

1 retrace his steps.

2           What we have been doing here the last few days is we  
3 have been doing what we can to reenact the last seventy-two  
4 hours of Jesus' life.

5           And that's based on a few chapters of John's gospel,  
6 so if you would come with me to John 13 you'll see the last  
7 seventy-two hours.

8           And we're going to look at where this other  
9 disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, had been.

10           The context of this Chapter 13 is Jesus had just  
11 ridden into town a few days prior to this on the donkey.

12           They now are having the wonderful Last Supper meal  
13 that we just emulated a few moments ago together, they had  
14 eaten together the Lord's Supper.

15           And then Jesus does this curious thing in the 13th  
16 Chapter of John.

17           He takes off his outer robe, which probably was his  
18 only robe, ties a towel around his waist, and then insists on  
19 washing the disciples' feet.

20           We see Peter, he has his name all over this story,  
21 because Peter says Lord, you're not going to wash my feet.

22           And Jesus says I need to wash your feet, or else you  
23 have no part of me.

24           He says, well, you are not going to wash my feet.  
25 You can have my hands and my head, you can have what I do and

1 what I think, but you're not going to have where I've been.

2 But Jesus says no, I have to get your feet. I have  
3 to get between your toes and I have to cleanse you of your  
4 past.

5 And finally, Peter doesn't really get it, he goes  
6 whatever, give it your best shot.

7 Jesus washes all the disciples' feet, except for  
8 Judas who flees into the night.

9 That's 13th Chapter. This is all happening with  
10 seventy-two hours.

11 We then continue to read this story, but we look in  
12 then in Chapter 13, look at Verse 22 and 23.

13 "The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of  
14 whom he was speaking. One of his disciples, the one whom  
15 Jesus loved, was reclining next to him.

16 "Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus  
17 of whom he was speaking. So while reclining next to Jesus,  
18 he asked him, "Lord, who is it?"

19 This is that same nameless disciple, the one whom  
20 Jesus loved.

21 You see, here is the point. He was close to Jesus  
22 in life.

23 In fact he was right next to Jesus. He had his head  
24 on his chest as they had the meal together. That's the  
25 closeness of this other disciple.

1           So when this text says the one whom Jesus loved,  
2           it's not that he didn't love the other ones, he did, but he's  
3           talking about this particular one.

4           "Simon therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of  
5           whom he was speaking.

6           So while reclining next to Jesus he said, "Lord, who  
7           is it?"

8           Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I give this  
9           piece of bread when I have dipped into the dish. So when he  
10          had dipped the piece of bread he gave it to Judas, son of  
11          Simon Iscariot," and then he flees into the night.

12          That's how close he was. That's the point I'm going  
13          to hammer in here, is this beloved disciple, the one whom  
14          Jesus loved, was close to Jesus in life.

15          Very close. How close? Had his head on his chest  
16          at the table.

17          What happens now in the story is really interesting,  
18          because Judas flees.

19          Jesus is still teaching the eleven that are there,  
20          and Simon Peter, we notice him in Verse 36, he says, "Lord,  
21          where are you going?"

22          Jesus says, "Where I am going you cannot follow me  
23          now, but you will follow afterward."

24          Peter said, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I  
25          will lay down my life for you."

1           Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me?  
2 Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows you will deny  
3 me three times."

4           As it turned out he didn't let him get between his  
5 toes. The deep cleansing hadn't yet taken on Peter.

6           Peter is like no way, that's not going to happen,  
7 and Jesus is sensing this.

8           And so in 14:1, the rest of the disciples are  
9 probably buzzing, because he just said you are going to  
10 betray me, he says, "Don't let your hearts be troubled. In  
11 my father's house are many dwelling places. If it were not  
12 so would I have told you I go to prepare a place for you?"

13           And one of them goes how are we going to know how to  
14 get there?

15           He says "I am the way, and the truth and the life."  
16 The pattern, the source and the code of existence.

17           And he says not only that, Chapter 14, Verse 12, "If  
18 you believe in me you are going to do even more powerful  
19 things than I've done."

20           And right across the column he says I'm not going to  
21 leave you orphaned, in Verse 18, you are going to do it, and  
22 I'm going to help you do it, if you believe in me.

23           And then the story continues, it keeps going,  
24 Chapter 14, all of this in the same teaching.

25           Chapter 15 comes along, they have just finished the

1 foot washing ceremony and some teaching.

2 And Jesus is sensing we probably need to move around  
3 a little bit because people can only sit for so long.

4 So they get up, they walk across the roofs of the  
5 house tops in Jerusalem and you could smell the roast lamb in  
6 every Jewish household.

7 Everybody was having Passover, but candles are being  
8 extinguished, people were going to bed, turning in, having  
9 their families tucked in for the night.

10 Jesus is walking along with the eleven and they are  
11 following him kind of like little chicks following the mother  
12 hen.

13 And Jesus walks over and he sees the precipice of  
14 the temple and at the very top there is a sign that is carved  
15 into the precipice, and he looks up and he says, Chapter 15,  
16 Verse 1:

17 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the  
18 vinegrower."

19 He's the gardener, and he does some pruning, and he  
20 teaches them about abiding.

21 He teaches them about being in the race for the long  
22 run.

23 He says you are going to have to work from your  
24 rest, not vice versa or you're going to get burned out.

25 You need to produce fruit that lasts, and here is

1 how you do it, by putting your head on my chest and resting.

2 So the disciples are hearing all this wonderful  
3 teaching, all of these wonderful teachings are being said,  
4 you didn't choose me, I chose you, it's going to be okay, I'm  
5 not going to leave you orphaned.

6 And then Chapter 16 comes along. Look at Verse 1.  
7 "I have said these things to you to keep you from stumbling."  
8 In other words, keep your balance, don't fall down.

9 The 16th chapter keeps going. He starts then to  
10 pray for the disciples.

11 He prays for the world in the 17th Chapter that we  
12 might be united and not divided, and wouldn't he be so  
13 frustrated that we are so divided today?

14 16, 17, all of this wonderful teaching. Chapter 17,  
15 all of mine is yours, and yours are mine, I have been  
16 glorified in heaven, so that they may be one and we may be  
17 one, sanctify them in the truth, for your word is truth,  
18 Father.

19 So here is what happens next. In 18 and 19 Jesus is  
20 arrested.

21 First he's betrayed. He's arrested. Peter denies  
22 him, just as Jesus said he would.

23 He's arrested. Peter is warming himself by the  
24 charcoal fire there in the 18th chapter.

25 Jesus is hauled away for a mockery of a trial. He's

1 flogged, he's beaten, he's hung on a cross to die.

2           And we look in at Chapter 19, Verse 25, and here is  
3 what the soldiers did.

4           "Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were  
5 his mother, and his mother's sister Mary, the wife of Clopas,  
6 and Mary Magdalene.

7           "When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he  
8 loved," there that guy is again, "standing beside her he said  
9 to his mother, "Woman, here is your son. Then he said to the  
10 disciple, here is your mother, and from that hour the  
11 disciple took her into his own home."

12           Here's the point. Jesus had this one disciple whom  
13 he loved that was close to him in life, and now he's  
14 ultimately close to him in death, and now he's inviting him  
15 again to be accountable.

16           He says of his own biological mother, here is your  
17 mom, here is your son. In other words, be a family.

18           And the beloved disciple welcomes Mary into his  
19 house, took care of her as his own for the rest of his life.

20           It's great to rewind a little bit and see where this  
21 guy is, isn't it?

22           The beloved disciple was close to Jesus in life and  
23 in death and now he's going to be accountable.

24           And then, here's the great thing, not only is he  
25 going to be accountable, but he's going to write and tell

1 about it, because here we go back to Chapter 20, that's where  
2 we started.

3 Then look at Chapter 21. Chapter 21, this is after  
4 Easter, we've got this wonderful story, he has appeared to  
5 the disciples in the upper room, he says receive the Holy  
6 Spirit, he breathes on them.

7 Thomas does his I'm not going to believe unless I  
8 feel and touch. He feels his hands.

9 And Peter, we don't really know what he's doing, but  
10 he's obviously still feeling a little embarrassed and afraid  
11 and also horrible because he has denied Jesus, just as Jesus  
12 said.

13 So we see in the 21st Chapter, he says I'm going  
14 fishing. I have had it.

15 So he goes fishing, and some other disciples go with  
16 him, one of them is the one we're talking about, they go out  
17 and they catch nothing.

18 But Jesus comes and he says, guys, I've told you  
19 before, do it my way. He teaches them.

20 They catch 153 fish, bring them in, have a charcoal  
21 fire, Jesus appears and they realize it's the Lord.

22 Verse 15, Chapter 21, "When they had finished  
23 breakfast Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, Son of John, do  
24 you love me more than these?"

25 Peter said, "You know I love you, Lord."

1           You have to wonder what Jesus' emotion is about  
2 then. Yeah, I know, you told me that before, and you denied  
3 me three times.

4           So he asks him three consecutive times, and each  
5 time Simon says yes, I do love you.

6           He says then feed my lambs, tend my sheep, and feed  
7 my sheep.

8           Then look at Verse 20. "Peter turned and saw the  
9 disciple whom Jesus loved following them. He was the one who  
10 had reclined next to Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord,  
11 who is it that is going to betray you?"

12           When Peter saw him he said to Jesus, "Lord, what  
13 about him?"

14           Remember this story, we just read it, Jesus said to  
15 him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is  
16 that to you? Follow me."

17           So the rumor spread in the community that this  
18 disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, would not die.

19           Yet Jesus did not say that he would not die. He  
20 said, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is  
21 that to you?"

22           "This is the disciple who is testifying to you these  
23 things and has written them, and we know that his testimony  
24 is true.

25           "But there are many other things that Jesus did and

1 if every one of them were written down, I suppose the whole  
2 world itself could not contain the books that would be  
3 written."

4 In other words, it's John. That's why we call it  
5 John's Gospel. The beloved disciple. Isn't that cool?

6 Here is the deal. Jesus is teaching us there is  
7 this disciple whom he loved that is close to him in life,  
8 close to him in death, and then lives to tell about it, and  
9 write about it, and we have been talking about that, telling  
10 the story.

11 Here is the question. What about us? Our emotion,  
12 our motion, our distance, our direction?

13 How close are we? How fast are we? Are we living  
14 to tell about it and write about it?

15 It is said that there are three testaments in the  
16 Bible. The Old Testament, the New Testament, and your  
17 testament.

18 But here is the deal. I come back to that motion  
19 thing. I think a lot of people are running away from that.

20 Somebody asked me just the other day, "Mark, I used  
21 to really like it when you put rock and roll songs in your  
22 messages. Are you going to do that anymore?"

23 I said, "sometimes when they come up I will," and I  
24 have one this morning that Brad has keyed up.

25 Hit it real hard, would you please, Brad? It's an

1 old Bob Marley song.

2

3 "You're running

4 And you're running

5 And you're running away

6 You're running

7 And you're running

8 And you're running away

9 But you can't run away from yourself

10 Can't run away from yourself

11 You can't run away from yourself

12 You can't run away from yourself."

13

14 The story and the song have the same message. They  
15 talk about motion and emotion. They talk about distance and  
16 direction.

17 You're running and you're running and you're running  
18 away, but you can't run away from yourself.

19 It's great in the song because the next thing he  
20 says is you must have done something wrong. Why can't you  
21 see?

22 Here's the bottom line. We have done something  
23 wrong.

24 Peter has done three things wrong, but, you see, God  
25 will always find us, and it depends on the direction that

1 we're running, no matter what the emotion.

2 I loved our Good Friday message, because it talked  
3 about how all of the emotions are sanctified in the cross of  
4 Jesus, whether we're happy or sad, mad or glad, it is all  
5 sanctified in the cross of Christ.

6 It isn't about faking it; it's about making it, and  
7 making it our own.

8 And here is the wonderful thing about this story, as  
9 I reflect on it, is you've got these disciples that have done  
10 some things wrong.

11 The greatest distance in the universe is from the  
12 human brain to the human heart.

13 And there are so many of us that we just are not  
14 going there. It's either too emotional, or not emotional  
15 enough.

16 But what is the motion of the Spirit? A lot of us  
17 just come to the tomb, instead of going away from the tomb,  
18 and we're all going to die some day, but we can't run away  
19 from ourselves.

20 We can run away from God. I know it. I've done it.  
21 And a lot of disciples before me have as well.

22 But, you see, what he does is he catches us, he  
23 captures us, he invites us into the future, and here is the  
24 thing I love about it.

25 The flow of grace is up, and in, and then out. It's

1 I love the Lord my God, my neighbor, and then myself.

2 But, you see, the world has that backwards. We've  
3 got that all mixed up.

4 It isn't what you know, it's who you know that's  
5 important.

6 And here is the bottom line for me on Easter. I  
7 want you to know that you're the one he calls his beloved  
8 disciple.

9 You don't have to be Peter, but if you read the  
10 Bible, and we sang it in that song at the beginning, rejected  
11 and alone, he did it for me, he did it for you, you are the  
12 beloved disciple.

13 So here is my challenge and invitation to you is be  
14 close to him in life, not just death.

15 Be close to him in life, also you'll be close to him  
16 in death, and live to tell about it.

17 Up, in, out to the world.

18 This world is dying, it's thirsty, it's dry, it's  
19 dysfunctional, because if you're like me you read the paper,  
20 every day you see all the argument now amongst the atheists,  
21 and they are all taking shots, "The world would be a better  
22 place if we didn't have organized religion."

23 There's some truth in that, but if we didn't have  
24 the disorganized religion of the Christian faith, and the  
25 disorganized religion of Easter Sunday, we would all be going

1 to hell.

2 So you are the beloved one. Have your head on his  
3 chest every chance you get.

4 Because if you do that, the rest of it will stay in  
5 balance.

6 And hang around with people that are the same way,  
7 I'm the vine, you are the branches, you have to hang  
8 together, hang around with people who are wired the same way.

9 And then go out and tell the story like John, for  
10 you are the beloved. Let's pray for a moment.

11 I want to wish you a happy Easter. It is that  
12 Seinfeld thing, isn't it? It's like Jimmie is getting  
13 angry. George is hungry.

14 Well, Lord, Mark is impatient sometimes, and so is  
15 Matthew, and so is Luke, and so is John.

16 Lord, forgive our impatience and lead us into your  
17 future.

18 Lord, we have been running around in a lot of  
19 different places, a lot of different directions, and my  
20 friends today, Lord, might have some distance issues that you  
21 need to bridge, so would you do that?

22 I suspect, Lord, as some of us were praying the  
23 Lord's Prayer, when we talked about forgiveness, the people's  
24 hands that we were holding were some that we needed to  
25 forgive. So may we do that and be accountable for that,

1 Lord.

2 I thank you, Lord, for the beauty of Easter, for the  
3 motion of the disciples throughout all generations, and for  
4 blessing our emotions.

5 And, Lord, would you send us in your direction to  
6 make a difference in this world.

7 We thank you, Lord. The people of God together said  
8 amen.

9 Happy Easter. God bless you. You guys are the  
10 best.

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