

Before I get into this morning's message I want to tell you about the new series that begins next Sunday. *Voices: Discerning the Influences in Your Life* is a great opportunity for us to step back and explore the voices that are all around us seeking to direct or distract us.

Throughout the course of the series we'll explore the many voices that fill our heads and how we need to weed through the many different influences in our life and find the voice of God. Then we will go to Mother's Day and explore the influence that parent's voices have in our lives- voices that can encourage but can also bring hurt and pain. That will be followed by the voice of experience in which we will explore how we choose the right voices to listen to. May 22 we have something special to share with you about the voice of Linglestown Life past, present and future. Then we wrap the whole series up with a sermon about discernment as we learn the keys to hear and know the voice of God.

Read Luke 24:13-35

It's Easter morning; and what drives so many of us to a place of worship today is the hope that all this talk of resurrection, rejoicing and renewal is true. It's Easter Sunday, resurrection morning; but too many people are still living like it's Friday- captive to the tomb, captive to death and defeat. The realities of life, the stressors that we all face often keep us in the tomb rather than following the steps of Jesus into life.

I've never had the joy of visiting Jerusalem yet, but I was reading someone's account the other day about their experience of stepping inside the tomb which many believe is the actual burial site of Jesus. The writer described the incredible emptiness of that space. After a few minutes of taking in the significance of that emptiness he emerged back out into the sunlight, back into the fullness of life.

Then he said it struck him that the tomb was empty. The emptiness meant that those who fear death and those who have lost loved ones do not need to fear because Christ is alive and nothing can separate us from the love of God. The emptiness of the tomb means that we are no longer in bondage to the grave; instead we are free- free to follow the steps of Jesus into life.

Then he summed up his thoughts by reflecting on the angel's invitation to the women to come in and look around. The angel's words were simple, "Why do you look for the living among the dead. He is not here. The tomb is empty!" Then he added what he believed the angel might well have said, "If you are looking for Jesus he's just outside the door. He's waiting for you!"

Folks the message of this Easter is so simple, Jesus is waiting for you just outside the tomb. He's stepped out the darkness of the grave into the light of day and he is waiting for you to join him on an incredible adventure into real life!

As I said earlier, I think too often we live in the tomb; we live like it's Friday. But Jesus is inviting us this Sunday to follow in his steps into life.

I don't know where you may find yourself right now; but the good news this morning is that you don't have to stay captive to Friday when you accept Jesus' invitation to follow him into life.

We've spent this entire Lenten season learning to walk in the steps of Jesus. We walked with Jesus so that he could teach us to be servants. We walked with Jesus in these last few days from the Last Supper to the cross and to the grave. But today Jesus issues an invitation for us to walk in his steps and to walk from death to life.

As we follow in Jesus steps this resurrection morning, we walk...

from mourning to rejoicing,  
from darkness to light,  
from despair to hope.

Do you know anyone in that tomb of mourning, darkness or despair?

The apostle Paul in speaking of Jesus' resurrection in 1 Thessalonians 3 reminds us that unlike the rest of the world that has no hope; because of the resurrection of Jesus we have hope!

In the Old Testament prophet of Isaiah we hear that the Messiah, that is Jesus, takes our mourning and turns it into rejoicing.

The gospel of John opens with a poetic reminder that darkness, no matter how hard it tries cannot overcome the light.

Because of the resurrection, because the tomb is empty; Jesus invites us to follow in his steps from the grave to life.

As we follow in Jesus steps this resurrection morning, we walk...

from fear to confidence,  
from selfishness to gratitude,  
from distrust to trust,  
from lost to found.

Fear and distrust are all around us these days. Economic fears, health fears, fear for our children, our future... the list could go on and on. Most of our fear is driven by mistrust. Mistrust of people, government, even religion.

But Jesus invitation is to step out of this tomb of fear and distrust created by sin. Sin causes relationships to fracture which leads to distrust. Sin creates selfishness that keeps us from living in gratitude and only looking out for ourselves. And a world that is lost in the effects of sin is waiting to be found and led to real life!

If you've had a broken relationship; if you've learned not to trust; if you're wandering and lost; then I invite you to follow Jesus!

Jesus knows the way to life. He has promised never to leave you or forsake you. He is someone who you can always trust!

As we follow in Jesus steps this resurrection morning, we walk...

from loneliness to community,  
from pain to healing,  
from captivity to freedom.

1 Peter 2:24 (Isaiah 53:5) by his wounds we are healed.  
Luke 4 set the prisoner free.

As we follow in Jesus steps this resurrection morning, we walk...

from ashes to beauty,  
from regret to forgiveness,  
from doubt to faith,  
from discouragement to courage,

As we follow in Jesus steps this resurrection morning, we walk...

from cold-hearted to passionate,  
from going through the motions to purposeful action

As we follow in Jesus steps this resurrection morning, we walk...

from death to life. As disciples of Jesus Christ this is the good news of Easter. Christ is Risen! And just like him we are changed! Alive! Risen!

I love the story of the Emmaus Road. I think it parallels so much of our life experience.

Jesus walks with us down dusty, dirt roads. He walks along side of us when we are discouraged and disheartened. And he speaks the truth into our lives. And I think sometimes we are oblivious to the fact that Jesus is right here with us all the time. Through his Spirit he is teaching, guiding, directing us all in the hopes that the time will come when we realize who he is- the resurrected Son of God!

And like those two disciples who walked with him; it wasn't until Jesus broke the bread that they could see Jesus. As we often hear when we receive communion, we are the body of Christ broken for this world. If people are going to see Jesus it is because we've followed him out of the tomb and are living the life that he promises is ours by faith.

I invite you this morning to start following in his steps. Walk out of the darkness of the grave into the light and life that Jesus has for all of us to experience.