

Practice Guide for March 31st 2024

Into the Wilderness, pt. 6—Heaven’s Homily

Suggested Ice Breaker (5 minutes)

Spring Thing

Spring is officially in full swing, take a minute to share your favorite spring activity.

Opening (5 minutes)

Before beginning, open the meeting time with 2 minutes of silence to help you focus on interaction with God and one another. At the end, ask someone to open the gathering time with prayer asking for the intervention of the resurrection power of Christ.

Question for the group: What promptings or longings were stirred in your heart this past Holy Week? (i.e. your biggest takeaways)

Reflecting On Scripture (20 minutes)

Have someone read Mark 16:1-11, then read and reflect on the following quote:

Who is Jesus? He is the hinge of history. He is the hope for the oppressed. He is the inspiration of the dying. He is the King of kings, the Lord of lords. He is the greatest teacher who ever lived, the greatest mind that ever thought. He sparked the greatest movement ever spread. He offered the greatest gift ever given. He alone mastered life. He alone conquered death. He alone overcame sin. He alone grows more present with each passing year. He is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the victorious risen king.”

—John Ortberg

Questions for discussion:

1. Put yourself in the place of the faithful women in this story, what are some of the emotions and thoughts that may have been running through their minds?
2. How might this resurrection narrative, as it was constructed, have encouraged the late first, and second-century believers who were under immense pressure and persecution?
3. Which of the angel’s words most encourages you in your current situation?

Community Practice (25 minutes)

Have someone *slowly* read aloud the following quotes. Pause for a moment to reflect between each one:

Humankind is quite naturally unfulfilled when we try to suck infinity out of finite things.”

—Christopher West

“You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.” —Augustine

Discuss these quotes, what are some of the Biblical truths each of them highlight and how do they interact with each other?

Take 3-5 minutes to journal your response to these questions:

1. What are the things, people, and relationships in my life that could use the resurrection power of Christ?
2. When I am in a dark place (mentally or situationally) is there anything “finite” that I find myself escaping to or seeking comfort from, instead of “looking for Jesus” as the angel said?

Share your answers in groups of two or three. If it feels appropriate, spend a few moments praying with each other over what you discussed before joining groups back together.

Group Discussion:

- In His resurrection, Jesus came out of the grave in the dark and lovingly worked with the disciples to address their fear, skepticism (Thomas), and shame (Peter). How can we demonstrate that same kind of love towards those in our sphere? How about our church community?
- *Bonus question: Discuss Christ's view of Resurrection and the Reign of God in contrast with the popular perspective of that time, how does it differ from what you'd previously thought or been taught? In what ways can it impact your life and faith today?*

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Have one person close in prayer and/or *slowly* read aloud this prayer from the 13th Century Carthusian writer Ludolph of Saxony:

*O Lord Jesus Christ,
by your glorious resurrection,
you appeared alive and immortal to your disciples and faithful followers,
stayed with and taught them for forty days,
and showed them many infallible proofs,
speaking about the Kingdom of God,
and comforted them and assured them of your actual resurrection,
removing all doubt from their hearts.*

*O Lord,
grant that we may be numbered among those
chosen by God to be witnesses of your resurrection,
not only by word of mouth,
but in actions and truth,
for your honor and glory;
with the Father and the Holy Spirit
you live and reign as one God,
now and forever.*