

Series Theme: The Names of Jesus

Title: Jesus as Lord

Date delivered: April 16, 2017 - Easter

Preacher: Revs. Douglas and Joyce Donigian

Memory Verse: "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good. His faithful love endures forever."
Psalm 118:1

Summary: Two people – Mary, the sister of Martha, and Cleopas, a believer but not a disciple of Jesus, continue sharing their stories regarding the events of Good Friday through Easter Sunday.

THE FIRST SCRIPTURE LESSON: Luke 24:1-12

THE SECOND SCRIPTURE LESSON: Luke 24:13-34

A two-part retelling of the experiences of two people who were greatly affected by the events of the events of Good Friday through Easter Sunday:

Mary – the younger sister of Martha and Lazarus. Their family ran an inn in Bethany, a place where Jesus and his disciples often stopped.

Cleopas – A follower of Jesus but not one of his disciples. He lived in Emmaus and often would go to hear Jesus when he and his disciples were in the area, but he did not follow Jesus as he traveled. Cleopas was a good friend of Lazarus.

Mary: Hello. In case you don't know me, my name is Mary. Most of you probably know me as Lazarus' sister or maybe as Martha's sister. I'm the youngest. People here in Bethany know Martha, but it seems like everybody has heard of Lazarus, the man Jesus raised from the dead.

This week has been a nightmare for me. Worry and more worry. Jesus had been staying with us in the evenings. He kept saying that he was going to be arrested and executed by the authorities in Jerusalem. And yet, every morning he left our inn and went right into the city. I worried every time he left that I might not see him again.

I know the authorities were really mad at Jesus. They even sent us word that if Lazarus came into Jerusalem, he was a dead man. Why would they want to punish Lazarus for being brought back to life? Why did they resent Jesus for doing it? Now I'm wondering whether every new guest who comes to our inn has really been sent to kill Lazarus in

his sleep. So we're all trying to sleep with one eye open. One more thing to worry about.

If we were being threatened out here in Bethany, it must have been so much worse for Jesus in the middle of Jerusalem. They didn't know him. He was so kind and wise and forgiving; I didn't want him to die. But Jesus wouldn't stay in the shadows. Every day he taught in the temple and got into debates with the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the Herodians and the Priests and the Scribes and every powerful group out there.

Then on Thursday evening Jesus didn't come back. I knew he would be late because he was having the Passover dinner with his disciples in the city. I kept two candles burning in the window so he could find his way, but he never came. Cleopas says that after he shared the Passover meal with his disciples, he went to the Mount of Olives. Then the temple guards found him and arrested him. Cleopas said he heard that one of Jesus' disciples led the guards right to him.

Jesus kept saying he would be arrested, and he was right. I wanted him to be wrong, just this once.

It didn't take them long to kill him. Cleopas saw him on a cross Friday morning. He was all beaten up. They must have whipped him before nailing him up. He was dead by noon. I'm going to call that day bad Friday from now on. The day a bunch of bad people did something very bad. Cleopas said Jesus' mother and a few other women and only one of Jesus' followers were there at the cross. Then someone took his body to a tomb just outside the city.

Friday night and Saturday night I could hardly sleep. I kept thinking about his mother. What would it be like to see your son die on a cross? I felt destroyed, and I had known Jesus only two years. My heart went out to his mother who had known him all his life.

I decided I had to see her, that sorrowful woman. Maybe I could give her some comfort or at least share her pain. Cleopas told me where they were staying. Lazarus wanted to go too, but Martha and I threatened to tie him up if he didn't promise to stay here. We did not need him killed, too.

Martha agreed to handle things at the inn so I left early Sunday morning for Jerusalem. I knew it would be dangerous traveling alone, but I hoped it would be easier to get around before the crowds were awake.

I was doing fairly well when suddenly two men ran right into me and sent me sprawling. The only thing I could think was robbers or kidnappers. I jumped up and threw handfuls of dust in their faces and yelled with all my might. But just then I recognized them.

They were two of Jesus' disciples. Peter and John. I had fed them at the inn four days ago.

Meanwhile, they were coughing and shielding their eyes, and suddenly they recognized me. They looked mortified. I forgot being afraid, and we all hugged.

They told me this amazing story. Some of the women had gone to Jesus' tomb that morning to cover him with burial spices. Just like I had done for Lazarus. But he wasn't there. The tomb was empty. And the other Mary, Magdalene, said she saw angels and that Jesus was alive and she had touched him and talked to him.

At this my heart stopped and then began to race.

Peter and John had gone to see the tomb themselves and were on their way back when they ran into me. No, they hadn't seen Jesus or his body. The tomb was empty, and Peter thought Magdalene's talk with Jesus was probably wishful thinking. We talked a moment more and then I followed them back to Jerusalem.

It was like a home coming. All his followers were there. But it was different. They were always so boisterous. When they stayed at the inn, other guests would yell at them to quiet down so they could sleep. Now they were huddled and silent. I finally got to meet Jesus' mother. She was gentle and polite but her sorrow was written all over her face. Only Mary Magdalene was more animated. She insisted Jesus was alive and she had spoken to him.

I stayed for most of the day and finally kissed Jesus' mother's hands and left for home. So I'm walking on the main street out of Jerusalem.

Wait. Who is that running toward me? I've seen him before... Cleopas?!?

Cleopas: My name is Cleopas. Lazarus' best friend. I've never had a week like this. Have you ever heard the expression, "It can't get any worse than this"? I said that every night this week and every night I was wrong. The next day it did get worse.

It started last Sunday when Jesus went into Jerusalem. He had brought Lazarus back to life after he was dead four days. Everyone was talking about it. When Jesus came to the city, everybody left the temple and ran out to meet him. This made the priests mad. Then the people started calling him the new king. That made King Herod mad. Then he turned over the tables of the money changers and he told them they had turned a house of prayer into a den of thieves. That made them really mad. The uproar began to sound like a riot. That made the Romans mad. I said this could not get any worse.

I was wrong. On Monday a temple guard came out to Lazarus' inn and told him he was a marked man and they would kill him along with Jesus if he showed his face in Jerusalem. So now Lazarus and Martha and Mary are all afraid to go outside their inn. I thought it couldn't get worse than that.

Wrong. Rather than hide, on Tuesday Jesus went right back into Jerusalem. This time He compared the priests to thieves who stole land and killed the true owner's son. He humiliated them in public. This made them even madder. Couldn't get worse?

Wednesday Jesus went back again. This time they tried to gang up on him. The Pharisees and Sadducees and Herodians, who normally hate each other so much they won't even talk, tried to make Jesus say something he could get arrested for. They asked him about divorce, about his authority, and about the Roman taxes. In every case he made them look foolish to the point they gave up. Why was this so bad? Because if they couldn't defeat him with words they would resort to swords.

Thursday, Jesus was betrayed by one of his own followers. He was arrested and tried in the middle of the night. I felt this was as bad as it could get because they couldn't actually kill Jesus. After all, if he could bring a dead person back to life, he could certainly keep himself alive; unless he didn't want to. And Jesus said he had come to save the world. He won't be able to save it if he is dead.

Friday, I was wrong again. It could get worse. Not only did they whip and abuse him. They nailed him on a cross and he died. So now we had seen the worst, right?

No. Saturday was harder yet. All his followers were shattered. He had been their hope and their reason for living for three years. And he was gone. What about his promise to save the world, to free the imprisoned, and to care for the needy? What should any of us do now? Peter was inconsolable. He had denied that he knew Jesus after Jesus was arrested. If Jesus were alive, he knew Jesus would forgive him. But now Jesus was gone. And Jesus' mother. I can't describe her pain.

This morning some of the women went to Jesus' tomb to cover his body with burial spices. I said goodbye and began the trip back to Emmaus. It was a slow walk.

I fell in with another man from Emmaus. We walked together but we didn't talk. Then someone else caught up with us as we walked with our heads down. I would hardly have known he was there except he began asking questions. About Jesus.

I couldn't believe he was so clueless about all that had happened. I told him how hopeless we all felt and how Jesus had been killed before he could save the world.

It turned out he knew the scriptures. He began quoting Psalms and Isaiah and Malachi. He argued that Jesus' death did not stop him from saving the world. The scriptures

predicted that the one God sent, the Messiah, actually had to die. His death was a once-for-all sacrifice to pay for everyone's sins and this opened heaven for everyone who believed. So his death really did bring salvation to the world.

By this time, we reached Emmaus, I was so amazed by this fellow that I wanted to know him better so I begged him to eat with us. So we sat down with him. Then he offered the meal prayer and I looked at him closely for the first time. I had seen him before. At Lazarus' inn. At the temple. On the cross. It was Jesus himself. I closed my eyes in disbelief. When I opened them he had left. But my heart was burning. My hope returned. It was like a mill stone was taken off my back. I had to tell his followers that Jesus is alive.

I've been running as I've been talking to you. I'm almost there. One more street to go. Wait a minute. That's Mary. What is she doing in Jerusalem?

Cleopas: "Mary! Mary! It's me, Cleopas. I have to tell you. Jesus is not dead. He did come back to life, after all."

Mary: You're absolutely sure?

Cleopas: Yes, I'm sure. I was with him for an hour. I'm on my way to tell his mother. Spread the word.

Mary: Happy scream. So he's alive? I'll tell Lazarus and Martha!

Mary and Cleopas: He's alive!!!