

Victory Lutheran Church- Jacksonville, FL

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Worship Series: *Resurrection Reality*

Service Theme: *We Have a Meaningful Message to Share*

Sermon Theme: *See Something, Say Something*

April 14, 2024— Luke 24:36-49

In 2010, the United States Department of Homeland Security launched a nationwide anti-terrorism campaign with the mission of teaching the public how to recognize signs of potential terrorist activity, and how to properly report such suspicious activity to appropriate law enforcement authorities. To draw people's attention to the campaign, DHS used the catchy slogan: "***If You See Something, Say Something.***"

The point being, if you see something suspicious, it's important to say something to the proper channels. Because keeping potential terrorist activity to yourself not only won't do any good, it might actually cause more harm! As the campaign's tagline reminded, "***Your tip could save a life!***" If you see something, saying something might be the difference between life and death for someone!

When you think about it, that campaign slogan simply encourages us to do what we naturally do. If you see something important, or interesting, or exciting, or meaningful, your brain sends a signal you can't ignore: "I've gotta tell somebody about this!" That's the reason social media is such a juggernaut in our culture; why every baby gender reveal is now recorded and posted online; why everyone posted, texted, or emailed their pictures and videos from this week's solar eclipse—because when we see something we think is meaningful, we're compelled to share it with others. **See Something, Say Something.**

We see that same reality take place over and over again in the Bible too! When the Christmas shepherds, directed by the angel choir, lay their eyes on the baby Jesus they run into the streets of Bethlehem to tell everyone what they'd seen and heard. When Jesus revealed to the

Samaritan woman at the well that he is the Messiah, she immediately told everything she'd heard with her neighbors. When Jesus drove a legion of demons out of a man, he begged Jesus to let him become his disciple, and eventually settled to go home and tell everyone who knew him what Jesus had done. When Jesus performed his miracles, even when he warned people not to tell what they'd seen, they couldn't help but spread the word.

And the same thing happened immediately preceding this morning's Gospel and sermon text. On Easter Sunday, two of Jesus' disciples, their hearts heavy with grief and confusion over Jesus' death, began the seven-mile trudge from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus. As they walked, the resurrected Jesus, who somehow cloaked his identity to them, came alongside them. As they walked, Jesus walked them through Scripture, explaining how everything that had happened on Good Friday and Easter Sunday was necessary for salvation. Until finally reaching Emmaus, the disciples invited Jesus in. As he broke bread with them, Jesus finally revealed his identity to them and disappeared.

And what did they do? They didn't say, "Wow! First thing tomorrow after a good night's rest, let's head back to Jerusalem and tell everyone!" No, immediately they set off on a shocked, joyful run that must have felt like their feet never touched the ground; seven miles straight back to Jerusalem so they could tell the other disciples what they'd seen!

Later that night when they arrived back in Jerusalem, they immediately found the 11 disciples—sans Thomas—and told them that they'd seen Jesus alive! As they were blurting out the joyful news, the events of our sermon text unfold. "***While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."***"

While Thomas catches the flack and nets the nickname for his doubting demand for evidence, the rest of the disciples do the same here. As the terrified disciples doubt their senses, Jesus compassionately invites them, "***Look at my hands and my feet. It is I***

myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” But it still seemed too good, too amazing to be true! So Jesus ate a piece of broiled fish, and since it didn’t go splat on the floor at his feet, the disciples began believing what they were seeing—Jesus really had physically, in the flesh risen from the dead!

And after giving the disciples peace in the resurrection reality, Jesus then gave them a mission! “You’ve seen something, now say something!” Jesus tells them, **“Repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in [my] name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”**

But Jesus didn’t give that mission just to those disciples in that room on Easter evening. When Jesus says the Gospel would be preached to “all nations,” he means to everyone! To all people of all nations of all time! Obviously, those disciples in that room weren’t capable of taking that message to all nations! Which means that Jesus was giving this mission and purpose to all his disciples—including us!

But how can we do that? I mean, we’re not witnesses of these things like they were, right? We haven’t seen the nail holes in Jesus’ hands, or the spear wound in his side. We haven’t seen Jesus in the flesh standing in our midst proclaiming peace and eating fish like they did. How can we “say something” if we haven’t “seen something” like they did?

But ultimately, it wasn’t just what the disciples saw that had changed their hearts and made them bold witnesses. It was what they’d heard! Before the Emmaus disciples began their hurried trip back to Jerusalem, they marveled not at what they’d seen, but what they’d heard, asking, **“Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”** On Easter evening, it wasn’t everything they’d seen that had convinced the disciples, it was what Jesus had said to them. **“Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day.”**

God has given us this same message to share! The Gospel message which changes people’s hearts, lives, and eternity, that’s what God gave to his disciples to tell others, and what he’s given to us to tell others. God also promised to give his disciples the very power of God the Holy Spirit to make the Word work and accomplish its purpose. That’s what Jesus was referring to when he mentioned **“I am going to send you what my Father promised. Stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”** And whenever we tell other people what we’ve seen and heard in the Bible, the Holy Spirit is also working powerfully through the word to accomplish God’s saving purposes.

What they’d seen with their eyes and what they’d heard from God’s Word, and the power of the Holy Spirit working through their message transformed those terrified disciples locked away in fear and doubt to become bold witnesses for Jesus. Just look at Peter in the first reading, boldly confronting Jesus’ enemies, the same ones he’d previously fled from and denied knowing Jesus to avoid, **“You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.”** Because of what they’d seen, they needed to say something!

Do we? If your team wins the championship, you could easily tell someone about their season for hours. We’re only too eager to share pictures and stories of our kids or grandkids. We love the opportunity to introduce someone to the hobby we enjoy most. When we have an exciting surprise, we have to struggle to hold ourselves back from telling others! So why is it so hard for us to tell other people about the best, most exciting, most meaningful message of all? If our natural preset is to see something and then say something, why do we naturally seek to keep Jesus to ourselves? Why do we gravitate toward keeping the Gospel locked away like those disciples locked away in fear and doubt?

It’s because not everyone’s excited to hear it. Not everyone wants to hear about what we’ve seen and heard. Most everyone will let you gush about your favorite team or hobby. Most everyone will look at the pictures of your grandkids and agree how cute they are. Because

they either agree with what we're telling them, or at the very least, they're not challenged or confronted by it, so they're fine with it.

But the message of Christianity might oppose their worldview, or rebuke their lifestyle, or point them to the only one who can provide what they think they can achieve themselves. So what we've seen and heard in our lives or in God's Word might not be what people want to hear.

But it's absolutely what they need to hear! Because God has given us the most meaningful message to share! Not only is the Gospel meaningful for all people, it's meaningful in every situation. Compare that to the meaningless platitudes that people use to try and comfort each other.

When someone feel crushed by shame and guilt over something they've done, you could tell them, "Everyone makes mistakes! You'll do better next time." Or you could say what you've seen and heard; that yes, ***"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves,"*** but that Jesus cried out on the cross, "It is finished!" and his resurrection from the grave proves that our sins have been paid for in full; that Jesus is ***"the atoning sacrifice for our sins...and for the sins of the whole world."***

When someone feels alone and unloved, you could tell them, "There's plenty of fish in the sea!" Or you could say what you've seen and heard, that Jesus' suffering and death was motivated by his perfect

love for you, and that because he rose and ascended into Heaven, he's able to be with you always and at all times.

When someone's on their death bed, you could tell them, "This is just the circle of life!" Or you could say what you've seen and heard—that when Jesus rose from the dead, he destroyed death forever. And that because he rose, we will too.

When you're dealing with someone who's experienced trauma, you could tell them, "Just look deep inside and find your true self!" Or you could say what you've seen and heard, that when Jesus raises us back to life at the last day, he's going to give us glorified bodies—finally and completely cleansed and set free from the traumatic things that were done to our bodies, or that we did with our bodies, or that plagued our bodies with pain and suffering.

Just this week, I shared the reality of the resurrection as a source of comfort with someone who was struggling with guilt over their sin, and with someone whose earthly life is nearing its conclusion. This is the meaningful message that God wants us to share with all people in all circumstances. When you've seen something, we need to say something! Tell everyone what you've seen and heard. Friends, emboldened and empowered by the Spirit, let's say something! Because saying something might be the difference between life and death for someone. Tell everyone—those who do believe and those who still doubt—about the peace that Jesus has given them, because he lives!