

**Lenten Message Series: Signs for Life: Learning to Navigate Spiritual Living**

Feb. 26 - April 12

Series Text: Jeremiah 31:21-22a

“Set up road signs; put up guideposts. Take note of the highway, the road that you take. Return, O Virgin Israel, return to your towns. How long will you wander, O unfaithful daughter?”

**Sun., April 12: Easter Sunday**

Message: Signs for Life: BEGIN ONE WAY

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

Text: John 14:6 “Jesus said, I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Memory Verse: “So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is a new creation. The old things have passed away, and look, new things have arrived!” -2 Corinthians 5:17

Blurb: Jesus has come to offer us the path of life abundant and eternal. Jesus’ resurrection is not just a victory over sin, hell and death. It is an invitation to join Him on the path of life. Jesus opens up a new road that before was not available to us. This road leads us to glory, where we will live only in perfection. In glory, we will live only one way. It’s a journey we start now, today! Happy Easter!

**Opening Song:** Special music

**Welcome** -David

Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed!**

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Generational Bridge: Empty Tomb Cookies, video by Pastor Andrew

**Memory Verse** -David

“So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is a new creation. The old things have passed away, and look, new things have arrived!” -2 Corinthians 5:17

**Worship Music** -Sanctify

Welcome guest musician -Pastor Andrew

*Christ the Lord Is Risen Today*

*One True God*

*Living Hope*

Worship Prayer -Pastor Andrew

**Offering:** -Cassi

**Special Music:** Kevin & Gary, guest saxophone players

**Prayers:** “Panacea” -Pastor Andrew

**Message:** Signs for Life #8: BEGIN ONE WAY -David

**Call to Focus:**

**PP#1:** L: We are on the journey of Lent. God has given us road signs for the journey.

**P: We are on the journey of life. God has given us road signs for the journey.**

L: Jeremiah 31:21 says, “Set up road signs; put up guideposts. Take note of the highway, the road that you take.”

**P: STOP. Stop to discern your journey. Stop to reorient your lives. Stop sinning.**

L: NO OUTLET. So many paths in life lead to nothing. We come to see clearly.

**P: SPEED LIMIT. God’s timing is always right. We must take care not to travel along our path of life faster or slower than God has planned for us.**

**PP#2:** L: DO NOT ENTER. We stick to God’s path with perseverance. We keep fast to the center.

**P: YIELD. We let God have His way. We produce a harvest.**

L: ONE WAY. God’s way is better. We turn around and choose it.

**P: CURVES AHEAD. Life has curves. We can go in confidence knowing that Jesus will carry us through.**

L: BEGIN ONE WAY. Easter gives us a new route, a route to abundant and eternal life.

**P: We come to see the road signs God has placed for our life’s journeys.**

Signs for Life: Learning to Navigate Spiritual Living. BEGIN ONE WAY. John 14:6 “Jesus said, I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

That first Easter morning, the disciples stayed home. They didn’t gather together in worship and celebration. Actually, they stayed home, behind closed doors, afraid.

Sound familiar? That’s how we’re celebrating Easter this year, right? We’re not here, in this sanctuary, gathering together in worship. ... But maybe this is a great way to celebrate Easter. Maybe we can be more like the first disciples, who all stayed home on Easter.

Well, almost all of them did. Mary Jesus’ mother, Salome mother of James and John, and Mary Magdalene got up early before sunrise to go to Jesus’ tomb that Sunday. They went to finish anointing Jesus’ body. You see, they had taken Jesus down from the cross late on Friday, and the sun was setting. The Jewish Sabbath started at sundown, so everyone had to be home before then. So the women were only able to do a hasty preparation of Jesus’ body, a quick sprinkling with myrrh and olive oil, and they put His body in the tomb until after the Sabbath, when they could come back and finish the job properly. So, they got up early Sunday morning and went to the tomb, with their soap and water, spices and oils.

But when they got there, just after sunrise, the stone had been rolled away and the tomb was empty. They did not find Jesus’ body. Instead, there were two angels there who greeted them with some amazing news. Matthew 28:5-7, one of the angels said to them, “Don’t be afraid. I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He isn’t here, because He’s been raised from the dead, just as He said. Come, see the place where they laid Him. Now hurry, go and tell His disciples, ‘He’s been raised from the dead. He’s going on ahead of you to Galilee. You will see Him there.’ I’ve given the message to you.”

Their response? It says in verse 8, “With great *fear* and excitement, they hurried away from the tomb and ran to tell his disciples.”

They go back home, and they tell the others. But it really didn’t stir them all that much. Luke 24:9, “When they returned from the tomb, they reported all these things to the eleven and all the others.” What did everybody do? All jump up and go gather together in celebratory worship? No. They stayed home. Verse 11, “Their words struck the apostles as nonsense, and they didn’t believe the women.” Well, *Peter* decided to go to the tomb to look at it himself. John went with him. Verse 12, “But Peter ran to the tomb. When he bent over to look inside, he saw only the linen cloth. Then he returned home, wondering what had happened.” All the rest stayed put.

And in fact, they all stayed indoors all day long! This is our Easter! We can identify.

John picks up the story that evening. John 20:19, “It was still the first day of the week. That evening, while the disciples were behind closed doors because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities Jesus came and stood among them. He said, “Peace to you.”

So, Easter is a bunch of Jesus’ followers, all staying home, kinda melancholy. They’ve heard the message that Jesus is alive, but they are still stuck behind locked doors. Today, we are reenacting that first Easter!

So although it was Easter, and Jesus’ resurrection had been proclaimed, it wasn’t until they met the risen Jesus that Easter actually happened *to them*. It had happened at the tomb, but it didn’t happen to them until Jesus showed up where they were, stuck “sheltering at home.”

Did you hear what they were facing? They were “behind closed doors because they were *afraid*.” It was dangerous out there. It was deadly! They were secluded because of fear and safety. We are also staying at home because we are hiding from the deadly danger out there.

But we are even more like the disciples than we think. It’s not just the coronavirus that is threatening us. We are living lives of fear and restriction *even without this outbreak*. Imagine your lives even a month ago. Our lives were already limited and curtailed in so many *other* ways, even though we live in an era with more possibilities and opportunities than ever before. In many ways we are *stuck*, and *shut in*, and *fearful*, *deflated* by the reality of death: like *stuck* in a life rut that is going nowhere, *stuck* in behavior patterns that are keeping us grounded or that we cannot seem to overcome, *stuck* in a relationship that is suffocating, *stuck* with someone who is functioning in unhealthy and hurtful ways, *shut in* with dreams beyond our reach, hopes that never become reality, *handcuffed* by finances that are choking, *fearful* of losing what we have worked so hard for, losing our marriage, our relationship with a rebellious child, losing control of our own lives as illness, age, and circumstances take away our independence, *fearful* of not being loved, or valued, or important, *fearful* of others who control our jobs, our futures, our ability to make our own plans, *deflated* by the death of a meaningful relationship, a known way of life, of a future we had planned out. We know being stuck, fear, death! We are behind locked doors in so many ways!

If only it was just coronavirus that we were struggling with! That we could wait out, or mediate through good hygiene and social distancing. The physical danger will eventually pass. But these other choking, threatening, stifling dangers, these suffocate us even after physical dangers pass. These are our ongoing realities. And we don’t see a curve when they will abate. And some of these dangers are getting worse because of our quarantine. We have to face them more directly, because we can’t fill our lives with distractions, we can’t just go and do something else. We can’t run from them. And living with others around us so much more closely brings out the worst in others, and in us! We start to see that part of the problem in those strained relationships, is us! We need help. We need relief, from all of that...and from our own ungodly behaviors and patterns. We need new life. We need transformation.

So, as we stay home this Easter—perhaps *because we are staying home this Easter*—we can hear this *deeper* Easter message. It's not just about getting together with friends and family, eating and having fun, celebrating with Easter egg hunts and chocolate while we hear the news that Jesus is alive. Much of this we can't do this year. And the message is still true, yes. But we need Jesus to come right to where we are stuck and bring us the peace that only He can give. We need a different future, a different path, even when COVID-19 passes.

When Jesus comes to them all sheltering at home, isn't it interesting that the first thing Jesus does is bless them *with peace*. Now, that's not what we think about first at Easter. Peace is Christmas! Peace on earth, right? But this is how God brings peace on earth, through Jesus' death and resurrection. At Easter we think more about joy and celebration. But Jesus doesn't say, "Joy to you!" He says, "Peace to you." Why? I think it's because He's addressing what they are facing in the room: fear. They are afraid, and Jesus gives them exactly what they need: peace. They need not be afraid, even of the death that they were worried about, because now Jesus has just conquered even death. They can now have true peace!

But it's not just that death has been conquered. Jesus then tells them to go out and live differently. Go and forgive those who have wronged you. Live a life of forgiveness. And He then gives them the Holy Spirit to apply the transforming power of Easter to them. He gives them a new path, a new life, a new future, power over all that threatened them, and an inner change to make them conquerors over all that defeats them. Because of Easter, they can begin a new way.

Turn to 2 Corinthians 5. This is a fantastic Easter passage, not because it tells the story of what happened that first Easter, but because it tells how Jesus' followers can live a new life of peace because Jesus brought Easter right into their lives. We need to hear this! Let's take a closer look.

2 Corinthians 5:14-21 (CEB), "14 The love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: one died for the sake of all; therefore, all died. 15 He died for the sake of all so that those who are alive should live not for themselves but for the one who died for them and was raised." Because Jesus died—He died to and for sin, our sin—because Jesus died, we who claim Jesus, have shared in His death. He died our death to sin, so in Him *we have also died to sin*. We who claim Jesus are also raised to new life with Jesus—He was raised conquering our death—and so we are raised to live a new life. And this new life we do not live for ourselves, but we live for Jesus. That's a brand new path that Jesus gives to us. It's a very specific path. Not just any path. It's a set way. The way of Jesus.

At Easter, we BEGIN ONE WAY.

Verse "16 So then, from this point on we won't recognize people by human standards. Even though we used to know Christ by human standards, that isn't how we know Him now. 17 So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is part of the new creation. The old things have gone away, and look, new things have arrived!" We no longer look at things like we used to before Jesus came into our lives and broke them open. We don't relate to people the same way. We don't judge, and retaliate, and seek vengeance, and get offended, and nurse our wounds, and treat them the way that they deserve. Before we only knew Jesus as our teacher and guide, savior and friend. Now, He is our new life! He lives in us and transforms us, making us new, and able to begin a new way. When Jesus comes in, He changes us. He makes us new, able to live differently, controlled by different passions, behaving in new ways, freed from old bondages and patterns. Because of Easter, we are new!

Verse "18 All of these new things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and who gave us the ministry of reconciliation. 19 In other words, God was reconciling the world to Himself through Christ, by not counting people's sins against them. He has trusted us with this message of reconciliation." The new life we have in Jesus sets us on a new path. And that new path changes how we live, and how we interact with and relate to others. Do you see this? Easter, when

it is brought right into our homes, into our lives, means that we live differently in how we relate to Jesus, how we relate to our world, how we relate to those around us, and how we relate to ourselves. Our sins aren't counted against us, and we don't count other people's sins against them! Instead, we incorporate them in reconciliation!

As we shelter at home, those closest to us become more and more annoying! Even their little things start to drive us nuts. But here is where we need Easter! It changes us! We do not get annoyed with them. We extend grace and reconciliation...the same grace and reconciliation God extends to us. Don't you think you're annoying to God? All those little things you keep doing? Well, we pass on the same grace God shows us, to those around us, *especially* when they annoy us. And, the Holy Spirit helps us change our behaviors so that we are less annoying to others who are stuck near us, too! And in fact, God then uses us as His witness to them for how Christians live. All this is a new and different path that we live as Easter Christians.

One more paragraph: Verse "20 So we are ambassadors who represent Christ. God is negotiating with you through us. We beg you as Christ's representatives, 'Be reconciled to God!' 21 God caused the one who didn't know sin to be sin for our sake so that through Him we could become the righteousness of God."

That Easter evening, Jesus came to His followers and said, "Peace be with you." After He said this, He showed them His hands and His side. [He was indeed crucified.] When the disciples saw the Lord, they were filled with joy. [There's joy! But,] Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I am sending you.' Then He breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you don't forgive them, they aren't forgiven.'" (John 20:19-23).

On Easter, Jesus sends them on a new path. It's a new path, with a new power and a new possibility. The new power is the Holy Spirit, who works on them, in them, and through them. They have peace in Christ. And the Holy Spirit then empowers them to extend that peace, through the forgiveness that they have experienced in Jesus to those others in their lives and to forgive them. The new possibility is a new future *even with the same people*! Isn't that good news? You may be feeling like you're stuck with a bunch of people whom you love dearly but feel you just can't take them any more! Praise God for Easter! You now have the Holy Spirit in you so that you are changed enough so you can have a new relationship with them, and even be God's witness to them.

Today, on Easter, we finish our lenten series on road signs, Signs for Life: Learning to navigate spiritual living. But we see it is not an end, but a beginning. On Easter, Jesus is pointing out a new path for us to live. He places in our road a BEGIN ONE WAY sign. You can live any way you choose, and there are tons of paths and routes and roads. But none lead to new life. On Easter, Jesus bursts out of the tomb, comes into the locked room where the disciples were stuck, comes into our homes and lives where we are stuck, and opens up the road that leads to life abundant and eternal, and sticks a huge BEGIN ONE WAY sign on it so we can take it. It's a very specific way, the way of Jesus. Jesus is our new Way, our new Truth, and our new Life. And that Way brings joy, for sure!—Happy Easter!—but also, deep, abiding peace. Fear no longer grips us. Death has been defeated. We are reconciled to God through forgiveness. We have the Holy Spirit so that we can apply forgiveness to others. And we go out from our locked homes, to be ministers of reconciliation. We may need to do that at a six foot distance for a while, but we can get Easter-creative in touching others and reaching out with joy, forgiveness, and peace.

So, finally, take the plastic Easter egg we provided in the Easter at Home Bags. Open it. In there you will see the BEGIN ONE WAY road sign. It's a replacement sticker for you, for the STOP sign we've used all Lent long. Replace it on your key chain, zipper, laptop, mirror, where you had

your foam STOP sign sticker. We've been trying to stop and get reconnected to Jesus. But now, on Easter, the risen Jesus has come to right where we are, right to where we have stopped, right into all the ways we are locked and defeated, and He gives us a new path of life. This becomes our new future. We are Easter Christians!

Christ is risen! **He is risen indeed!**

Hallelujah!

Amen!

**Closing Song:** *Day of Resurrection* -Sanctify

**Memory Verse** -David

"So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is a new creation. The old things have passed away, and look, new things have arrived!" -2 Corinthians 5:17

**Announcements** -David

Caring Circles

Grow group videos

Wednesday on line, Zoom!

**Benediction** -David

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