

Vision II
Week #1
April 1st 2018
Easter Sunday

Good morning and Happy Easter.
I first of all want to take this time
to Welcome everyone

Those gathered here in our place of worship
and those who are in our Parish Hall.
I hope you felt welcomed
when you walked through our doors
by our greeters.

We are so glad and honoured
that you have chosen
to spend part of Easter Sunday with us.

By the way,
if this is your first time to church in a long time,
or your first time since Christmas,
or first time ever,
if you're not even sure
about this whole church idea,
we're especially glad you came.

In fact, you're the reason we're here.
You see, our vision for our church
is to be the church
that is growing disciples
who are growing Disciples.

And our goal today is simple.
If you walk away from here encouraged,
and inspired by your time with us,
then we've done our job.

We would actually like you
to leave glad you came.

We're definitely not the church
for perfect people.
Actually, if you are a perfect person,
you're in the wrong place this morning
because this is not a church
for perfect people.
The church for perfect people is elsewhere.

This is not the church for perfect people,

or religious people,
or church people,
it's a church for all people.

No matter your background,
or issues, your hurts, your hang-ups,
no matter what you've done or failed to do,
no matter where you've been
or what's happened to you,
whatever you believe or think,
we think we have a message for you.

We think it's an important message,
a message that's always received
as good news when people listen to it.
In fact, we believe...now,
when people take hold of this message
and actually use it,
it's useful in their lives.

*It's a message about life change,
about living a more successful life.*

It's a message that can relieve our darkest fears
and our most intrusive worries.

A message that can address
our highest hopes
and our deepest longings.

It's a message about vision.

Vision is sight.

Most basically, it helps us see.
It provides clarity and direction,
allowing us to move, and grow,
and get to know the world around us.

When you live with vision,
you live with optimism and confidence
that we don't have to accept the world
as it is now,
that the world, in fact, can be better.

That we can leave it better than we found it.
And the thing about vision,

great vision,
it always brings blessing
and adds value into the lives of others.

Great leaders, in turn,
always have exactly that,
vision, blessing, and value for others.
We believe that the greatest leader
who ever lived
was Jesus of Nazareth
because he was like that.

He had the greatest vision ever
and he added value and blessing
to the lives of his followers.

Through his mission and ministry,
he painted a vision for a better future
that could be and should be for his friends.

To people living in fear,
he painted a vision of a life
that could be lived in confidence and in trust.

To people living in a culture
where life was meaningless and disposable,
he painted a vision
of a very different kind of life,
he called them salt for the earth
and light for the world.

In a world where people thought
and were taught
that they had to live in poverty and in slavery,
he painted a vision of living in freedom.

But on that **first** Easter Sunday morning,
that vision seemed dim.
Actually, dead.

Jesus had been betrayed and beaten,
and then nailed to a cross.
He died this savage, bloody, brutal death.

His followers fled in fear, they ran away.

And it appeared that his vision

for the future was over.

And that should have been the end of that.
But here we are, more than 2,000 years later,
celebrating his vision.
How did that happen?
Why is that?

Today we are going to turn
to the Acts of the Apostles
to the Story of what happened to Jesus'
closest followers and friends on that first Easter.

Here is what Peter said,

*³⁷ That message spread throughout Judea, beginning
in Galilee after the baptism that John announced:
³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy
Spirit and with power;...*

Acts 10: 37 - 38

Everyone in that part of the world
had heard about Jesus.

For sure, he was a rock star in the region.

Crowds followed him everywhere he went.
He had this magnetic personality
that attracted people.

And this revolutionary message
that nobody had ever heard before,
wherever he went, people could feel power.

Power just emanated from the guy,
he moved in power.

Not everyone, of course, liked him.
Some people, especially the religious leaders,
disliked and even hated him.

They were jealous of his popularity
and they were furious
that he wasn't very interested
in their religious rules.

Peter goes on,

*³⁸ ...how he went about doing good
and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for
God was with him.*

*³⁹ We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea
and in Jerusalem....*

Acts 10: 38

Turns out Jesus wasn't only a power
and a force, he was a force for good.

He healed people,
he healed people of their blindness
and their deafness.

People who couldn't walk walked
because of him.

He fed people, too,
he did it in some pretty miraculous ways.

He also challenged and encouraged people
to let go of their cynicism,
and their selfishness

to move beyond their prejudices
and their predispositions.

He dispensed a kind of wisdom
that was more than uncommon, i
t was unheard of, it was unparalleled,
and it amazed and astonished people.
He was definitely a great leader.
But Peter goes on to tell us he was,
in fact, more.
Peter said,

*³⁹We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea
and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging
him on a tree;*

Acts 10: 39

So the religious leaders conspiring
with the Roman authorities
to put Jesus to death,
to be done with him once and for all.

But Peter preaches the astonishing message

that Jesus didn't stay dead.

Three days later, he conquered the grave,
he rose from the dead.

And that is basically what Christianity
is all about.

It's why we're here today.

It's all about a person and an event.

The person is Jesus **the** Christ.

And the event is his resurrection from the dead.

What separates Jesus from every other good,
and great, and wise, and wonderful leader
who ever lived
is that they're dead.

I follow Jesus Christ because

I figure if a guy can rise from the dead,
he's just going to know more about life
than I do.

But that's me, maybe that's not you.

Maybe you're skeptical
about the whole message of Easter.
Maybe it sounds silly to you,
or it sounds like nonsense.

Well, if that's you,
you are far from alone in your skepticism,
and you're far from the first in that line.

First in that line would have been Peter
and the other apostles.
You know, that first Easter Sunday morning,
they weren't exactly sitting around
waiting for Jesus to rise from the dead.

They weren't counting down the days
until they saw **him** again,
not at all,
they were hiding in fear for their lives.
They were associated with a convicted criminal
and they had a price on their head too.

They were in a lot of trouble

and they knew it.

And even when they heard that the tomb was empty and the body was gone, they assumed that it had been stolen.

What other explanation was there?

After all, Jesus was dead.

And along with a man they thought his vision for the future was dead and buried with him, it was game over for everybody and everything.

They just hoped that they didn't end up dead too.

But then something happened that turned their thinking around. Peter tells us,

⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

Peter and the other apostles
only came to believe in Jesus resurrection
when they saw him,
when they talked to him,
and hung out with him.

And think about that point,
the guy rises from the dead,
he conquers the grave,
he defeats sin and death
once and for all and forever,
he pulls off the greatest feat in human history,
thereby changing human history.

And what's the first thing he does?
He hangs out with his friends.
He eats and drinks with them,
he cooks for them,
he takes them fishing.

Seems strange,
but it was all because the most important thing
for him at this point

was his investment in these relationships,
his investment in the vision
that he had for their future,
for this circle of friends,
this fellowship,
this movement that he called "The Church."

Peter concludes,

⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead.

⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Acts 10: 42 - 43

Through his life,
he cast a vision for a great life.
And through his death,
he cast a vision for eternal life.

If that's true, that changes everything.
And if that's true,

it just makes sense to get to know the guy,
which is easy enough to do
or at least start doing by simply
talking to him and allowing him
to talk to us as he speaks through God's Word.

Getting to know God
in the person of Jesus Christ
just makes sense because ultimately,
it's all and always about vision,
the vision he has for your life.

Did you know that God
has a vision for your life?

Whoever you are, wherever you're at,
whatever stage or state of life you're in,
however old you are,
God has a vision for your life,
for a new life,
for a better life,
for a more successful life,
for life of greater value and purpose.

Maybe God's vision for your life
is all about your family,
that it grow and thrive, maybe finally,
get along together.

Maybe God's vision for you
is to the single life,
right where you are, to be all that you can be.
Maybe God's vision is for your marriage,
that you'll find that perfect match
or hold on to the one you've got.

Maybe God's vision for your life
is all about that business you're growing,
or the work that you're doing
and bringing success to the work of your hands.

Maybe God's vision for your life
is all about overcoming fear,
or standing up to an addiction,
or facing a diagnosis without fear.
Maybe God's vision for your life
is all about healing and making

whole your heart.

Something as seemingly insignificant
as spending quiet time with him
where he helps you understand
that you are not alone, not at all.

Or maybe it's something as grand as
forgiveness and a fresh start.

In a moment, we're going to do something
we always do,
we do every single Easter.

We do it together with Christians
around the world
and down through the centuries.

We're going to renew
the promise of our baptism.
Basically, the promise
to live as children of God.
If you've already been baptized,

you can use this occasion
to make those promises again.

If you've never been baptized,
you're welcome to join us too,
make those promises for the very first time.

If you're uncomfortable in doing that,
that's perfectly fine,
just sit back and relax, no worries.

But if you decide to stand and join us,
why not do it with conviction?
You know, like you mean it as if to say,
"This Easter is going to be different.
This Easter, I am stepping
into a relationship with a person,
a real person, not a brand of religion,
not a Sunday school subject,
not some kind of silly obligation,
but a person who is a real person,
who has an absolutely beautiful vision
for my life [for my future](#)."