



CASCADIAN WEEKLY

April 16, 2021

Week 58

A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR JILL

Dear Cascade Christian Church,

This past Sunday I spoke about the after-Easter story of Cleopas and his companion meeting Jesus on the road to Emmaus. The traveling companions didn't recognize Jesus, but they listened to all he had to say to them about how the Old Testament prophecies had been fulfilled in what Jesus did at Golgotha. The two men did not know this was Jesus in their midst until Jesus broke bread with them. This week I continue to think about all the ways that God is on the move and in our midst, and how often in our humanness we don't recognize our Savior.

These weeks after Easter have not been easy: Michigan is a hot-spot for COVID-19, some of our church families are dealing with significant health issues, mass shootings, violence, and unrest rocks our nation, some of you are mourning the loss of someone you love. You may wonder where is God in all of this? These are 2 Corinthians 5:7 kinds of days -

In the New International Version translates this verse as: **"For we live by faith, not by sight."**

The English Standard Version is: **"for we walk by faith, not by sight."**

And the New Living Translation says: **"For we live by believing and not by seeing."**

The people of the early church could not see very far ahead, they were in new territory, guided by the Holy Spirit in a fresh beginning of the faith. While they could not visually see what was ahead, they believed Jesus was the Messiah, trusted in the faithful witness of the Apostles and followers who knew Jesus, and they were filled with and guided by the Holy Spirit.

We can do the same. These are faith walking days, and I commend our church board for leading with faith and hope in a pandemic. These are faith walking days, and our church staff keeps the faith as they teach our children and youth, as they lead in music and administration, and as they keep the church clean and safe. These are faith walking days as we worship together in the sanctuary, participate in live-stream services, or gather through Zoom. Robert Schuller wrote a bestseller called "Tough Times Never Last, But Tough People Do." Let's agree, these are tough times, but let's also recognize we are tough people who follow a strong Savior and an Almighty God. We will get through this - in fact, we ARE getting through this!

If you need some encouragement in getting through, please consider:

- Joining one of our two Bible studies on the life of Joseph in the book of Genesis - titled "You'll Get Through This" - based on the book of the same name by Max Lucado. The class is offered Tuesday morning, in-person in Centennial Hall at 9:00AM, and Wednesday nights at 6:30 through Zoom (email to get the link from me jforton@cascadechristian.com).
- Getting free counseling from Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services. We have a church partnership program for confidential counseling, including telehealth services, legal advice, and financial counsel. Call 800-442-0809 or 616-455-6210 and tell them you are part of Cascade Christian Church to have three free sessions.
- Consider volunteering. One way to get through tough times is to help someone else. We need volunteers at Second Mile House, in our Sunday School and Youth programs, with upcoming yard clean up, and at our church camp. Call the church office for more information.

Together we can live by faith, walk by faith, and live by believing, not seeing.

Keep the faith and love your neighbor, Jill

WEEKLY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

<u>Sunday</u> _(4/18).	Sunday School - 9:30 AM Worship - 9:30 AM & 11:00 AM Middle & High School Surprise Event - 12:00 PM
<u>Monday</u> _(4/19).	
<u>Tuesday</u> _(4/20).	Women's Bible Study "You'll Get Through This" (Centennial Hall) - 9:00 AM
<u>Wednesday</u> _(4/21).	Middle/High School Wednesday Night (High School Room) - 6:30 PM Adult Bible Study "You'll Get Through This" (Zoom) - 6:30 PM Troop 334 Boy Scouts (Centennial Hall) - 7:00 PM
<u>Thursday</u> _(4/22).	Griefshare (Zoom) - 10:30 AM Church Board Meeting (Zoom) - 7:00 PM
<u>Friday</u> _(4/23).	Church Office Closed
<u>Saturday</u> _(4/24).	Days for Girls Workshop (Centennial Hall) - 1:00PM

Financial giving
for the week
ending in
4/11/2021:
Budgeted:\$8,432
Given: \$10,414.14

ANTI-RACISM TRAINING SESSION

On April 17th from 8:30-3:30, the Anti-Racism Action Group will be holding a day-long anti-racism training session led by Reverend Kathy Bird DeYoung. To sign up contact the church office.

DAYS FOR GRLS WORK DAY

There will be a Days for Girls Workshops on Saturday, April 24, 1-4pm, 10 Volunteers are needed, no prior experience required. We will be making menstrual kits that involve both sewing and non-sewing abilities. Middle school and high school students welcome. Please contact Diane Phelps by email; dianephelps2010@gmail.com to RSVP.



MULCHING & YARD WORK DAY

Please join us on May 1 from 9:00 AM-12:00PM for a mulching and yard work day! Things to bring include; Work gloves, shovel, rake, tarps, leaf blowers, if you have them. Not to worry if you don't, we will have extra. All ages are welcome!

CAMP CRYSTAL

June 20-25 Elementary Camp
July 6-9 Day Camp
July 11-17 Middle School Camp
July 11-17 High School Camp
July 18-24 Family Camp

All registrations will be online this year.
Check the website for details



CAMP SUNDAY & OPEN REGISTRATION - APRIL 25TH

Sunday April 25th will be Camp Sunday. We will be highlighting all the programming that we have going on up at Camp this summer and reminding you to register.. There will be a registration table in the back to help you register and apply for scholarships. If you need help registering, come on the 25th or stop in and see Michael in the church office on Wednesday's from 1pm-5pm.

COME ON UP TO DAY CAMP

Do you want to experience a week (or just a day or two?) up at Camp Crystal with your child or grandchild? Come on up to Day Camp! If your child or grandchild is entering 6th grade or younger, you're invited to come up to Camp Crystal with them, enjoy our day camp programming during the day and then have your own fun during the afternoon and evening. Day camp is July 6th-9th and the programming starts at 10 AM and ends at 2:30 PM. Scholarships are available for families who want to participate!

INTERESTED IN BEING A COUNSELOR?

Are you or someone you know interested in being a counselor or counselor in training for Camp Crystal this summer? We are looking for counselors! If you are interested in counseling for Elementary Camp please email Jill at jforton@cascadechristian.com. If you are interested in counseling for Middle School or High School camp, please email Michael mdirksen@cascadechristian.com.



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

SUNDAY SCHOOL IN-PERSON

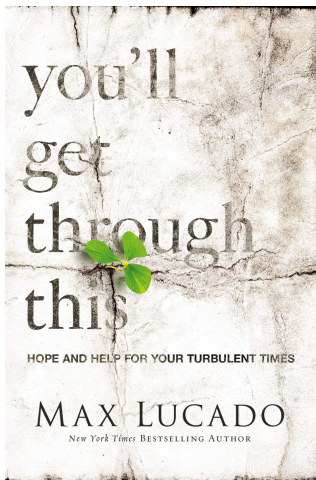
Every week at the **9:30 service** we have in-person Sunday School for children ages 4 on up. The children begin the morning in the sanctuary with their families and then are dismissed to go to class. Students will be brought back down to church after the service.

CRIB ROOM REOPENED

Our crib room has reopened for infants and toddlers through age 3 at the 9:30 service. Parents must make a reservation for this kind of childcare. Drop-ins will not be permitted. Reservations are appreciated by the Wednesday before the Sunday you plan to attend. Call the church office to make your reservation.

SUNDAY SCHOOL AT HOME

If you are not getting the children's weekly mailing at your house, call Keely at the church office.



ADULT MINISTRIES

GRIEF SHARE

A new session of Griefshare began on April 8 through Zoom. Join us each Thursday at 10:30 AM for this support group by emailing Pastor Jill.

"YOU'LL GET THROUGH THIS" BIBLE STUDY

Join us began on April 14th for a 6-week Zoom Bible study of the life of Joseph/Genesis. Class begins at 6:30 PM. Contact Pastor Jill for the link.

This class also offered on Tuesdays at 9:00 AM in Centennial Hall.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHAPEL UPDATE

As many of you know, the 11:00 service that is normally held in the Chapel is currently being held in the Sanctuary, because there are many members of our church who require to participate online which the Chapel currently cannot do. Dick Byerly, Tim Hartley, Mel Behm, Mark Langenbach, and I have all been working to change this! The equipment is on its way and we are ready to install it. Our hope is to have this finished and ready to go mid-May. Once this is all installed we should be able to commence worship in our Chapel once a again! Thank you for your patience and looks forward to getting our people back to our wonderful Chapel.

GRADUATION SUNDAY

If you know a senior who would want to participate in our Graduation Sunday Service, please reach out to Michael at mdirksen@cascadechristian.com. We are getting ready and need to start planning for that service. Thank you!



MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP



BE SURE TO SIGN UP FOR CAMP, MISSION TRIP, AND MACKINAC BEFORE APRIL 30TH TO RESERVE YOUR SPOT!!

WEEKLY EVENTS

We are back to a regular weekly schedule of events that include Sunday School during the 9:30 service. Wednesday Night Youth Group from 6:30-8:00. Then, typically, the 1st and 3rd Sundays of the month we will do a special event! We hope you join us!

OUTDOOR SURPRISE EVENT

On April 18th we will be having an outdoor event with all the Middle and High Schoolers. We will be having a surprise contest that WILL involve Easter candy (that's the only clue you're getting!). We will also have games and snacks! We will be meeting from 12pm-3pm. Hope to see you there!

VOLUNTEERING

We are in **need** of some parent volunteers to help us run Sunday School at the 9:30 Service as well as come on Wednesday Nights. If this is an area where you may have an interest in helping, please send an email to Michael Dirksen at midirksen@cascadechristian.com. No need to have kids in the program! All volunteers need to be screened before they are able to help.

MISSION TRIP & MACKINAC



CAMP SCHOLARSHIP



VOLUNTEER SIGN UP



4.11.2021 OPEN EYES, OPEN MINDS, OPEN DOORS

The congregation of Cascade Christian Church adopted the motto "Open Doors, Open Hearts, Open Minds" in 1965, our centennial year. This reflected the 100 year history of the church to bring the Kingdom of God to this community. To quote directly from our Centennial brochure: "From its founding at the end of the Civil War, the church doors have been open to anyone who sincerely desired to worship here." The old church record states the church was organized by "believers from several denominations who ... took the word of God as their only

rule of faith and practice." The doors of Cascade Christian Church have always been open for spiritual and social purposes, and the open minds and hearts of the people of this congregation have welcomed others who seek to know Jesus as Lord. This church has been and is a place where people can find a church home, a place that encourages you to read the Bible for yourself. This is a sacred space to stop and let God speak to you, a place that will always encourage you to keep the faith by letting your heart, doors, and mind be open to God's Spirit.

Our scripture today speaks of keeping hearts, minds, and doors open, and this narrative tells us how to do that - to remain open to God you need to keep your eyes open. This is another traveling story of Jesus on the road, all through Lent we have been on the move with Jesus, and He is still walking among His people on Easter afternoon. In the morning Jesus had appeared to Mary and the other women, but has not yet appeared to his disciples. Strain and worry consumed His followers, and the women's words - that they had seen the Christ - added to the disciples' confusion. The men were sad and scared, and you get the sense that no one knew what to do. How could they? This wasn't the outcome they'd expected or hoped for. That so often at times of sorrow and death. When tragedy gets close to you, when a trauma happens, you don't know how to respond, it is hard to believe this has happened, you're perplexed on what to do next.

During Lent, we've been with Jesus as He has been on the move. Late on Easter afternoon he has not stopped. Let's look at Luke 24, beginning at verse 13

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" "What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us.

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They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body.

They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

This story is a very human response to tragedy. There had been a lot of drama surrounding the death of Jesus with the actions of the religious leaders and the Romans, the frenzied crowd, an earthquake, the tearing of the curtain in the temple, and darkness covering the earth. **On the third day, it was a lot quieter.** Death can be traumatic, but afterwards can come a quiet, surreal time, where time stands still, we might stand still, we are immobilized, frozen in the rush of disbelief and of pain. Death can be devastating, but hope is quietly there, it might not be obvious, or it may seem hidden, but hope and joy will come back, they always do. I would like to look at this Easter story with you, and see if we can open our eyes to see Jesus, and find hope in a His way.

So it was Sunday afternoon, and we read of a man named Cleopas and his companion leaving Jerusalem to go to Emmaus, a seven mile journey. I want to pause a moment to think about who Cleopas might have been. Why did Jesus appear to this man? Jesus spent a lot of time with Cleopas and his companion, choosing time with them instead of going to the religious authorities, Pilate, and Caiaphas to show them He is alive. Jesus let these traveling companions see Him before some of the eleven disciples got to see Him, so Cleopas must be someone significant to Jesus, he might even be related to Jesus.

We read in John's account of the crucifixion that **Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's**

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sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. This sentence is interesting. Mary, the Mother of Jesus witnessed her Son's death, with her sister at her side. Mary was joined by two other women named Mary. But what does that second comma in this sentence mean? You can read there might have been three or four women at the cross. Who was Mary's sister, was she the wife of Clopas? If Mary, wife of Clopas, is a step-sister or sister in law to Mary, she might then be an aunt of Jesus. D.L. Moody and other great preachers believe Clopas and Cleopas are the same man, and if these women are sisters, that would make Cleopas an uncle to Jesus, someone who would have known Jesus, who would recognize Jesus. If not an uncle, and if Cleopas and Clopas are the same man, he and his wife are close to Jesus and Jesus' family. The Cleopas of Luke 24 knew Jesus somehow, and Jesus intentionally hid who He was from Cleopas, letting Cleopas be blind to who walked with him. There was a point to this - Jesus had teaching to do - to explain the bigger picture of God's perfect plan, and Cleopas and his companion were the ones Jesus chose to spend time with, these are the people Jesus chose to instruct.

No matter who Cleopas was, he and his companion were anxious to get out of town, out of the crowded city, away from the stench of death and the threat of further violence. They left by the Western Gate, headed to

Emmaus, which was a seven mile journey. Their discussion was intense, and out of the city, they were able to speak more freely. They had a lot to process, a lot to talk over.

Not long into their journey, a man they did not recognize overtook them and asked what news they were talking about. Cleopas might have been wary, wondering who this was, a friend or an enemy, could this man be trouble? Cleopas and his companions might have given each other the look of "Can you believe this guy?" The execution of Jesus was **the** news - it was the only thing people were talking about. Everyone had an opinion on the week's tragic climax and political intrigue. And to top it off, the story couldn't seem to end, that morning added a new twist to the tragedy - Jesus' body was missing. No statements had been issued yet from the Sanhedrin or the Romans, but there were rumors of a resurrection.

Cleopas and his friend stopped walking, they stood still, and looked down in deep grief and sadness. I can imagine Cleopas clearing his throat, trying not to let his voice break as he sadly asked - **"Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there these days?"** Cleopas told the stranger about the mighty prophet, and his words and deeds before God and the people. Then Cleopas paused, and said what I think are the three saddest words ever spoken - Cleopas said, **we had hoped**. He clearly felt this very deeply, **"But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel."** Hope was over and done for Cleopas. All was lost, and then the disturbing thought that someone had taken Jesus's body. I can imagine Cleopas getting choked up. If he was an uncle by marriage to Jesus, he would have been mourning his nephew. If he is simply a devoted follower of Jesus, it is clear he cared, and cared deeply. The One in whom he had put his hope had been executed.

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I can imagine him wiping his eyes and slowly starting to walk again, the stranger keeping step at his side, listening. Cleopas reported what the women said of angels, an empty tomb, news that Jesus lives, then explaining that some of the men had gone to the tomb and didn't find a body either. This says to me that Cleopas and his companion had been close to the action, they knew the twelve. They may have hidden with the disciples in the upper room, they knew the body of their Lord was missing, and they grieved. They had been close to Jesus, and will soon find out they still are.

The walk to Emmaus continued - then the stranger said the last thing that Cleopas and his friend expected: ***"O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"*** What must have Cleopas thought? But the stranger continued, and walked with these companions as the afternoon became evening. The stranger explained the scriptures, how beginning with Moses and the prophets of long ago, all of this had been planned, God's will had been done. And as the stranger spoke, Cleopas must have felt hope rising again, the hope that Jesus was indeed the Christ. Could it really be true? Jesus resurrected? And who was this man who so beautifully made sense of everything that had happened, and yet at first had seemed clueless? There was something about him.

When they reached Emmaus, the sun hung low in the sky and the stranger gave every indication that he intended to keep moving on. Cleopas and his companion begged with him to stay with them, at least for the night, and they were overjoyed when he agreed. At dinner the man took some bread, pulled it apart, and gave them each a piece. As soon as the bread touched their hands, they recognized who it was, they were in the Presence of Jesus. Then Jesus was gone.

This is not a new thing, God has been in plain sight before with His people, and they don't recognize Him. God had been right there, and no one noticed, or they couldn't see Him. Abraham didn't know God when God came to have lunch with him, Abraham just saw a traveling man. Jacob didn't recognize God, even as Jacob had a wrestling match with the Almighty. Joshua saw God as a soldier. Shadrack, Meshach, and Abednego saw God as a companion in the flames of the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar. Shepherds saw God as a newborn child in a manger. You may have experienced this too - you may have seen God and not noticed. As we read in Hebrews 13:2- ***"Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing, some people have entertained angels unaware."***

Why were Cleopas and his companion unable to see who Jesus was? Jesus was known to them, so why couldn't they see? The answer is in verse 25 ***"How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"*** Their outward inability to recognize Jesus mirrored their inward unbelief of what the scriptures had said about the Messiah. Jesus fully intended to help them see, but before He opened their physical eyes, He had to open their hearts and minds. Jesus knew that His ascension was nearing, and that meant that these two men and all the other witnesses of the resurrection wouldn't have his bodily presence for proof much longer. Post-ascension, Jesus would be seen through their testimony recorded in

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the Scriptures, as followers whose eyes, hearts, and minds were open.

God does not play hide and seek, but God does choose when and how He will be seen. Jesus chose to reveal who He was, very intentionally. Later Jesus walks through locked doors to meet His disciples to let them know He lives. Jesus opened the eyes of those who didn't get it, who couldn't grasp it, that the words of the Old Testament, the life of Jesus and His death on the cross, were all the predicted perfect plan of God. Jesus rising from death was the most spectacular event in all of history, but instead of appearing to the people in power, Jesus spent the afternoon walking with a couple of friends and explaining what God had done.

At the table, at the breaking of the bread, Cleopas and his friend could finally see, their eyes were opened. They recognized Jesus. So, do you? The last two weeks I have asked you some of the big questions: What is the most important thing in your life? What are you running away from? Who are you running toward? Today's question is "What will you choose to see?" Our goal as a church ought to be to see Jesus for who He really is, to recognize Jesus in our midst. It is too easy to be blind to our Savior. So easy to not see, to turn our head to avoid seeing, and our blinders are numerous - selfishness, anxiety, anger, sadness, disappointment, greed, lust, division, pride. We can be stumbling in the dark and have no idea that we're missing the light. What do you see - how is your vision? I would urge you, as a son or daughter of God, to think about opening your eyes to what God would have you see.

There comes a time when we need to get our vision checked, so we can see Jesus on the move, to see Jesus beckoning us to follow, to see His smile. His desire is that you and everyone else be with Him. I know these days are hard, but Cleopas and his friend found that you can walk with the Savior and not even know it. Paul put it to us like this is 2 Corinthians 5:7- we walk by faith, not by sight. When we still don't understand, we'll find Jesus is near, is still there, and will make Himself known to us, we just need to keep our eyes open, and our hearts and minds will follow. This is a source of hope, that like the two on their way to Emmaus, Jesus still

comes near, and wants to be with you, and will invite you to His forever table in His forever glory. When we don't understand, Jesus does, and can help us see that God is poised to come near to us as many times as we need, until we finally see and understand.

These are faith walking days, friends. We can't see too far ahead, if at all, but we can be assured God is already there. God has seen us through so much, and still has His eye on us. If this day or season in your life is dark, remember God's light shines for you and offers you a fresh road, one where you can walk with your eyes, heart, and mind open. God allows things to happen in our lives that we don't expect, Cleopas knew that - he did not expect Jesus to die. Those unexpected times might make us lose faith—and as a result we might lose sight of Jesus. But not being able to see Jesus doesn't mean that he isn't there walking with us. We may not recognize Him, but seek, look, and you will find Jesus. And when we do, we discover that we can trust the One who is patient with all of us slow to believe disciples. With Jesus, we can open our eyes, our doors, our hearts, and our minds. Amen and amen.