

The Greatest... (Week Four)

March 31st, 2024

“Victory”

Have you ever felt helpless or even hopeless?

- Was it about a relationship (marriage, child, friend)?
- A job or career
- A sickness or disease (for yourself or a loved one)?
- An addiction?
- Our country?

When you felt that way, what did you do?

- Hide in shame?
- Run away in fear?
- Take control in anger?
- Try to numb it?
- Start to self-destruct?

2000 years ago, the disciples dealt with:

- The government—Herod and Pilate—the law enforcement corruption and the injustice.
- Spiritual issues as the religious establishment was corrupted—collusion.
- Accusation of false teaching because they believed Jesus was the Messiah.
- Spiritual forces that tried to make one believe that the devil won, and that death was not escapable, and that evil can't be thwarted.
- Rejection—they couldn't go back to their hometowns or jobs. They would have been mocked as gullible, or as false teachers, resulting in their personal economy being shattered.
- Relationships—they had put their friends and families in danger.
- Doubt—for them personally, this feeling of “*I was fooled; I am so stupid; I can't even trust myself anymore.*”

How did this leave them feeling? Hopeless and Helpless.

- They were stuck in Jerusalem together, utterly defeated, hopeless, and helpless, **BUT THEN...**

JOHN 20:1-21 (NLT)

The resurrection changed everything! The crucifixion that was meant to be the greatest defeat to the greatest foes...

WAS NOW THE GREATEST VICTORY!

1. It meant that God accepted the offer of Jesus for our sins (Isaiah 53 NLT).

- The sacrifices of the Old Testament were imperfect and earthly. The sacrifice of Jesus was perfect; Heavenly (Hebrews 9:11, 24 NLT).

2. It meant that God had been fighting a different enemy than they understood. In His defeat of that enemy, He destroyed all the others.

- The devil—via sin had control of death.
- Walking by faith means seeing with different eyes.
- Even death isn't what it seems.
- It doesn't mean that there is no physical danger or consequences, but God is able to help us!

3. It meant that death wasn't the end.

- Evil doesn't have the final say.
- God has power to turn the worst things into eternal things.
 - i. It wasn't a victory for everyone though. Judas, the other thief on the cross, the religious leaders, Pilate, people who seemed to think that they had won (**Matthew 27:5; Luke 23:39-43**)!

Decision Time:

1. For unbelievers—Jesus is God's offer of truth. His desire is to have a relationship with you.

- Your response—to have faith and to believe. But what should I believe?
 - ✓ I am guilty of sin. We all are guilty of sinning against God.
 - ✓ I need forgiveness.
 - ✓ I need the King to be MY KING!
 - ✓ Faith—be baptized into Jesus.

2. For Believers—in a world of brokenness, hopelessness is still possible, but...

- We are His victorious people.
- When I feel defeated—I can bring hope and victory back into the story.
- Be mindful that when things are not what I want, they often are not what they seem.

When we run into situations where it seems that the world is too broken or that the enemy is winning, when there seems to be no hope in our economy, country, relationships, etc...

REMEMBER WHAT **ROMANS 8:18-28** and **2 CORINTHIANS 5:6-10** SAY:

- **We walk in faith, confidence, and hope and with us is THE LIGHT for others to see.**
- **When we walk with others, we are VICTORIOUS!**

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

Ice Breaker: Tell us about a time when you won or lost (*i.e. a game, competition, in life, a career, etc.*)?

Main Point: Victory belongs to the Lord, but we get to play a part. God calls us to both action and dependence on Him and others.

Primary Scripture: **Exodus 17:8-16** (Aaron and Hur lifting Moses' hands)

1. Who are the different people in this story and what roles did they play?
2. Which role do you think was the most important?
3. Who do you relate to the most? Why?
4. How do you think God has designed and gifted you to play a part in His victory?
5. How would you describe victory? What does victory look like in your life now? Who would you choose (*or have chosen*) to go into battle with you? Why?
6. How do you keep the victory you have in Jesus in perspective when you are going through the battles of life?

Additional Scripture to Consider: **1 Corinthians 15:56-57; Romans 8:1-2.**