

TRANSCRIPT: SIMPLE STORY STRUCTURE FOR EASTER—OR ANY—SERMON

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NOTE: How to use this transcript

You'll get the most out of this transcript when used with the video, rather than as a replacement for it. The video displays the brainstorming process to use this simple story structure. Without those visual references the transcript misses a lot in translation!

Hi. By the end of this video, you're going to be able to craft your Easter sermon simply quickly and efficiently that still speaks to the truth of what we're going through that contains both lament and joy.

I'm Lisa Cressman, an Episcopal priest and the Founding Steward of Backstory Preaching.

SIMPLE STORY STRUCTURE

Here's a simple story structure: want; but; then; so. In any story there is a character who wants something, but something gets in the way. Then they have to figure out how to manage what has just happened. So...that's the result of the story.

I'm going to focus on Peter in the moments after the crucifixion, before the resurrection, in particular, to show you how this story structure works and how it applies to today.

I created this mind map just a few minutes ago, and I have spared you the details of seeing me type. But I did this in real time and was making it up on the fly, which is what you do in brainstorming. (*Brainstorm while you do your exegesis.*)

WANT

What did Peter want of Jesus? He wanted Jesus to heal people. He wanted Jesus to be a savior.

He wanted him to be the Christ, the Messiah who would bring some kind of revolution to bear for the Jews so that they could get out from under the thumb of Roman occupation.

And Peter wants to serve Jesus. He wants to be his right hand man.

BUT/THEN

But of course, crucifixion.

Peter and the other disciples did not see that coming. It was a huge surprise and left them bewildered.

So after the crucifixion and before the resurrection, the disciples had been hiding. They scattered during the crucifixion.

They didn't know where to go or what to do.

And somewhere after that they got the news that Jesus had been crucified, that he was dead.

We know they came together because...immediately afterwards and in those three days that they didn't know would only be three days long, what did disciples do after thinking Jesus was dead and not coming back?

Well, they've gathered together. Time is going by. Like I said, we're in the middle of those three days. They probably ate together. They were the only ones in the world who knew what the last three years had been like.

I would think they would have told a lot of stories. So what did they—what stories might they have said? How would they have been processing this?

Well, the surprise that they didn't see this coming. They would've told the stories of Jesus's life, their time with him and how they interpreted that time. The stories that they had experienced with with Jesus were still real.

Just because he died didn't make them disappear. Those things had really happened. Jesus had had fed 5000 people.

He healed Peter's mother in law. He took the religious authorities on in public. He taught, and he preached that had a profound effect on these people.

SO

So even while they are grieving, there was a lot to celebrate... Jesus...so that there had been a crucifixion didn't negate all that Jesus had done.

There was still good news. They had waited three days before they got the news from Mary, that Jesus was alive, that he had risen and resurrection was the next huge surprise, an even bigger one than Jesus having died.

It put all of the stories I would imagine in a new context, new perspective, even Jesus's death started to be seen in a new light. They may not have understood it all yet, but resurrection had happened.

So all the stories that they had had with Jesus and his death and resurrection, all of them were real stories. There was even more to talk about.

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO US?

WANT

If this is what Peter and the disciples experienced of "want, but, then, so," how does this apply to us?

Well, right now, what do we want? We want an end to this pandemic, we want to feel safe.

We want to grieve for those who have died. We want to have a proper Easter celebration, and we want to be together in person.

BUT

But we can't. We're stuck at home. There's no big feast with all of our loved ones and perhaps of their church community. No Easter egg hunts. There's no big Easter celebration with lilies and hymn singing and trumpets.

There is still grieving and lamenting, and the death count has risen to new record levels in this pandemic, and it's really hard to find joy.

THEN

Then we can tell the stories, as I imagine, Peter and the Disciples did, not understanding how all of this fits together, not knowing how it works, not understanding how there can be such extraordinary grief and fear and loss and hunger while we're celebrating Easter Day.

How can we have this much lament combined with Easter joy? Well, we can tell the truth of what's happened.

We do the grief and we do lament. And the truth of Jesus is as true today as it always was. Jesus heals, Jesus took on the religious authorities. Jesus fed 5000 people. We have stories to tell also, and the impact that those stories that our relationship with God, what Jesus has done for us. We have those stories. We know how Jesus has healed us in the past.

The miraculous things that Jesus has done. Just because we're in the middle of a pandemic doesn't mean that all that we have experienced up to now is negated.

It's all still true.

SO

So, we can tell the stories—tell the stories of our grief because they are true stories.

They're true on this day, and we can also tell stories of praise and joy about Jesus, about our loved ones, about our church community, about the internet that brings us together, because we still have resurrection.

We never actually sit in the middle of the story as the disciples had to with that agony of waiting. We know that resurrection is out there. That is also part of our story. And it means that what we're going through now is not the end of the story.

We don't know what that's gonna look like. We don't know what it's going to be when this pandemic is over. But we do know that resurrection always comes after death.

SERMON OUTLINE CHOICES

GO BACK AND FORTH

In this case, these stories could be combined.

They could go back and forth. What did Peter and the disciples want? What do we want? “But” for Peter then, “but” for us, etc.

SEQUENTIAL

Or, they could be told one after the other.

LET LISTENERS DRAW THEIR OWN CONCLUSIONS

Once we start talking about Peter and the Disciples, it'll be pretty obvious, or with just a couple of quick references. But you can see how their story is still our story.

Possible Sermon Message in one sentence:

“The grief of lament, and the joy of resurrection: both are real today.”

Possible outline based on this simple story structure:

Peter wanted Jesus to be the Savior.

But Jesus was crucified.

Then Peter hid with the other disciples, where I imagine they told stories about Jesus, the many joy-filled ones, and the one tragic one.

So, Resurrection gave new meaning to the stories—all of them—and they told them to anyone who would listen.

As for us...

We want to celebrate Easter like we do every year.

But we can't.

Then we can do as the disciples did: tell our stories about our grief, and about Jesus.

So we can let the Resurrection give meaning to our stories—all of them.

CONCLUSION

So tell the story this Easter of both lament and joy and your sermon will come together quickly and easily.

God bless you. As you prepare your sermons, I pray you and your loved ones are safe and, as ever, Be Good News to Preach Good News.

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