

**Luke 24:13-35**

**Essential Church  
Week 2  
The Jesus Story**

**Introduction:** Good morning Church! And Happy Mother's Day to all mother's whether biological, foster, adoptive, and surrogate. The role you play in our homes, and in society is irreplaceable and often overlooked - Your loving care is a clear display of the great love of our God and we honor and bless you today!

Last week we began a new series we're calling Essential Church. And the idea is that at this moment many of us are despairing and lamenting the loss of what the church had become in the west (our large gatherings, corporate worship, Sunday school, etc). But we see this as an incredible opportunity for renewal. By asking ourselves questions like what is the church; and what is essential to the life of the Church, we believe that the church can and will go through a necessary renewal process and come out the other side of this more vibrant and more fruitful. And we believe the way forward is actually to go backward, to the beginning of the church. We need to look at the early church and see what was essential to their life. And what we find in Acts 2:42-47 is that the church made a liturgy - a habit and practice of devoting themselves to the Apostles doctrine, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers. And throughout the ages this has been a constant liturgy of the church though the manifestation of it may have taken different shapes or forms over the centuries.

By practicing this liturgy, and centering their lives on these essentials the early church was able to continually adapt, being both flexible and fruitful amidst the constant changes that they faced whether through growth dynamics, politics and persecution or the leading of the Spirit into new ventures. So we are spending the next 4 weeks looking at their liturgy - The things that they habitually observed and practiced together.

## 1. Liturgy of the Jesus Story

- a. The first in the list in Acts 2:42 is the Apostles Doctrine. So what does a liturgy of the Apostles Doctrine look like?
- b. And What is the Apostles Doctrine again?? The simple answer is that the NT is the Apostles Doctrine. It's the Jesus story, it's the Gospel, and the fulfillment of God's promise to bring about his kingdom. The Apostles were telling and retelling the early church the Jesus story again and again. They were teaching all that Jesus had taught them, about how all that was written in the Law, Prophets and Psalms pointed to him, about the coming of the kingdom of God in and through him, and how all the promises of God were fulfilled by him and available only through him. They were talking about the call and mission to get the message out to all nations that Jesus is the cosmic Lord of History. Of course they would have also taught what the Jesus story meant practically for the lives of this new community - the Church. It seems to me that the early church was obsessed with Jesus (In awe of him, he was their hero) - the Jesus story so moved their hearts they couldn't get enough of it. I think the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is a good example of what I'm talking about.
- c. The road to Emmaus story..... **“And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself..... They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?””**
- d. **Two things on this:**
  - i. First, Jesus summarizes biblical history and sets himself in the middle of it as it's apex and fulfillment. Since Jesus fulfills the grand narrative of scripture and history,

Disciples of Jesus see scripture and its narrative as a road map for our lives. It's the story, the meta-narrative or worldview for the Church. It's the redemptive story, and lens through which we see and engage the world.

- ii. Secondly, This retelling of history resonated in such a way with these two men, their hearts burned within them! The Jesus story had grasped their hearts and minds; to the early church it was the ultimate story. They wanted to know more, they wanted to hear it again and again and find their sole identity in it.

## **2. Our Liturgy**

- a. If as we said last week - that liturgy is something done by me for us, or done by us and for us. Then a liturgy of the Jesus Story would be our continual practice of telling and retelling the Jesus story to ourselves and to one another. To see and bring everything in our lives through the filter of the life of Jesus. Jesus' life becomes the pattern for our lives. For followers of Jesus he is the way, the truth and the life. We are taught by this story, transformed by it, and we allow it to inform the whole of our lives.
- b. The Jesus story then becomes our center, the baseline that we pattern our lives according to. It means that we measure failure and success by the story of God, as fulfilled in Jesus and not by cultural measurements and values. It means, we have joy, peace and hopefulness in the midst of whatever life throws at us because our future is glory in the kingdom of God. It means we can make sense of our sufferings now because it is the same path Jesus took, it builds character, preparing us to rule and reign with Christ and it will culminate in glory.
- c. To be devoted to the Apostles doctrine then, to make it your liturgy means it becomes the number one source of Truth, information, and influence for your lives. It must become the greatest influence. It must become for us more necessary than daily bread, if we are to be formed, transformed into Jesus

people - who reflect God's salvation, goodness and wholeness.

3. For many of us though, that simply isn't true. Jesus is not our hero. The Biblical story doesn't thrill us or bring us hope. Quite the opposite in fact.
  - a. *"The western story of progress by way of science, technology and the construction of a rational society is assumed to be the true story by our culture. The problem is that Christians who have embraced Christ have allowed themselves to be drawn into the Western story as their ultimate allegiance and, like their unbelieving neighbors, have made peace with the relegation of their faith to the realm of values. This is a misunderstanding of scripture and the church's abandonment of it's vocation to live in the midst of history as a witness to the true story of the world."* - Michael Goheen, *The Church and it's Vocation*
  - b. *Sadly for many of us we have more joy and anticipation over the next Netflix release than we do the Jesus story. We have more hope in the end of the shelter in place than we do the kingdom of God!*
4. *But "If it really is true that God has done what the Gospel tells us that he has done.. it must, it necessarily must become the starting point and controlling reality of all thought."* - Leslie Newbigin, *The Gospel and Modern Western Culture*
  - a. In order to rediscover our calling and identity we need to be a people shaped by this story, and the only way that will happen is that we tell and retell the story to ourselves, and to one another. That we make this an essential part of our church liturgy. That when we gather, whether in large or small gatherings, whether church leadership is there or not, that we tell and retell each other this story. We need to disciple one another in this story so that our lives are shaped by it in order to be sent out as witnesses to this true story of the world.
  - b. Church as we slowly make our way back to normal - whatever that looks like - as we have the opportunity to meet in smaller groups, that turn to bigger groups, let's determine now to be a

church that uses the gospel to disciple one another, in the random meet ups we have, the phone check ins, the random facetime or zoom call. Not in a strange boxy, inauthentic christianese type of way - but in sincerity, and as our authentic selves - if we truly believe that this is the story of the world, that we will want to pattern our lives accordingly so that we can live the most human, blessed, flourishing and purposeful existence this life has to offer and that we would want that for one another, and for our non-christian neighbors more than anything else.