

With Great Power: Dancing Together

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Preacher: Pastor Sherry Mahar

[0 : 0 0] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[2 : 3 0] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Amen. And we continue praising our Lord and our God.

[5 : 1 0] And we will crown him with many crowns.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[8 : 0 6] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. then we will talk. Then we will talk about this. And then we will talk some more after that. Thank you.

Thanks for being here. The 2021 fish fry season was a seven-week lesson in the fruits of the spirit with some humility thrown in.

We served 1,830 dinners. For comparison, last year, the two before COVID, we served 1,500. So that's kind of what the COVID's done.

We kind of learned a lot about what we are, who we are, what we're good at. We're good at putting 500 or 600 people in a dining room and serving a couple hundred takeout dinners.

[1 0 : 1 5] But we're maybe not so great as a drive-through. But it wasn't for lack of trying. It wasn't for lack of the effort of the people that worked. And I want to thank everyone who contributed.

People who did things they'd never done before. People who had to do things different than they've done things forever. But they all did great. And our success was on account of how good our people are.

Actually, we have, as usual, we have some fish left over. They come in packages of two. \$6 for one, \$10 for two. You can call the office if you're interested.

No one complained about the fish. Like I said, we kind of learned what we were good at and what we weren't good at. And, again, because of our volunteers, you know, that's the whole key to, you know, why we did what we did.

We learned that our prayer is what it has been for a year. What it will continue to be is, you know, we pray to get back to normal.

[11 : 31] We pray to get back to having people in the fellowship hall. We pray that we get back to being, you know, safe and healthy and free people that we are.

We pray to get back to normal. The highlight, I'd like just to share a little story. The highlight of Fish Fry for me was on a Friday of week six, in between my morning and my afternoon session, I had to meet with a gentleman for work.

And he asked me why I was in such a hurry. And I said, well, I coordinate the fish fries at our church. And he asked me where. And I told him, and his countenance changed.

And he lit up and he said, you go to that church? That's what you do? And I said, yeah, that's our fish fry. He said, my wife and I went there last year for the first time.

And we had such a great time, we went back. It was great. You people are great. Everyone was friendly and welcoming. The food was great.

[12 : 39] The service was great. The atmosphere was great. We can't wait until it opens up again. We can't wait to come back with you. And that's kind of who we are.

So Pastor Scott, geez, a little nervous, I guess. Pastor Kathy up there, whatever you might have heard about what a fish fries are here, that's what they are.

That's who we are. We're not a restaurant-servant fish. We're a church that welcomes our community to fellowship with us, to have a meal.

And we pray that that's what we'll get back to doing. So, again, thank you very much for everyone that helped out. And thanks, everyone, for coming and having a meal with us.

Thank you, Carl.

[13 : 37] We want to take a moment and certainly celebrate our leadership of the ministry over this past year. We hope we could not have accomplished what we accomplished without the hands of the meal. So, we may.

I guess not. Anyway, we're just having mic issues today. So, that's all right. Hopefully, everybody can celebrate that. So, let me say it again so everybody can hear that.

We wanted to take a moment and thank Carl for his leadership, for the way he has blessed us and the way God has moved through everyone associated with this ministry. We know that fish is a way we can touch people in the neighborhood.

And if that is one way, it's just one of several ways that we continue to be a blessing. And we are grateful to God and we are grateful for all who had their part in this. So, let's continue to think about the ways in which we give of ourselves.

One of these ministries is, of course, you may give through your finances. And so, you can give either online, you can give by sending your gifts into the church, or you can continue to leave your gifts here on your way out.

[14 : 42] So, let's enter into an attitude of prayer as we contemplate what God is doing and let the Spirit move us to give generously. Let the Spirit move us to the church.

Let the Spirit move us to the church.

Let the Spirit move us to the church.

Let the Spirit move us to the church.

Let the Spirit move us to the church.

[17 : 20] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Let it be to the honor and glory of your name. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, we pray.

Amen. Let's take our seats. So we come now to our conversation with God this morning, and we know that there are several things that are concerns that people carry.

[19 : 15] Whatever your burdens are, however heavy they may feel, know that your church is with you and that we are going to God's throne together. Let's also be clear that even in the midst of our struggles, we have reasons to give thanks.

God is always worthy to be praised. And in the season in which we stand, when we know God is working in powerful and unbelievable ways sometimes, let us make sure that we open our hearts and give God the praise God is due.

Let's pray together. Let us pray together.

Thank you. And we thank you. And we thank you.

their expertise as they continue to navigate our way out. Lord God, pray, we pray that you would pour your spirit out afresh. Grant that touch that all your children need as we continue to walk the road you've set before us. Lord God, we also know that there are several around us who are in need, whether that need be for food, whether that need be for shelter, or it be some other need.

[21 : 10] Lord God, move in your people. Let us move with hearts that show love in the most generous and open of ways. Let us continue to pour out ourselves as you have poured out yourself for us, that we may indeed show that there is a place, that there are a people ready to offer the love that the world so desperately needs, and that love is real and made real in many ways. Lord God, as we gather today, we also know that there are concerns on hearts, hearts that are broken because relationships are not what they should be, hearts that may be broken because they have lost loved ones and are in grief today. Hearts that are somehow just weighed down by depression because of the situations in which they find themselves. But Lord God, you have shown us that your power goes places no one can conceive.

Your power overcomes obstacles that all have faced. You have indeed made all things new. You have shown us that with you that with you all things are possible. So for those who are hurting, for those who are lost, for those who are confused, Lord God, we pray that your power will be made new in them today, that they will find their way to you, that people who love you will be in their path, offering comfort, offering that word, offering that gesture, offering that thing they need.

But Lord God, we know that truly the answer is always you, as you have shown us in the life, death, and resurrection of your son, Jesus the Christ, the one who truly makes all things new and possible. It is in his name we pray this morning. Amen.

Good morning.

Our scripture reading this morning is from the book of John, chapter 20, verses 19 through 31, and the book of 1 John, chapter 1, verses 1 through 3.

[23 : 59] On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you. After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side.

The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. And with that he breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit.

If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven. Now Thomas, also known as Didymus, one of the twelve was not with the disciples when Jesus came.

So the other disciples told him, We have seen the Lord. But he said to them, Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.

A week later, his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you.

[25 : 14] Then he said to Thomas, Put your finger here, see my hands? Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.

Thomas said to him, My Lord and my God. Then Jesus told him, Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched, this we proclaim concerning the word of life.

The life appeared, we have seen it and testify to it. And we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us.

[26 : 28] And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Thank you, Jan.

Thank you, Jan.

It's not good for me at all. And I would get so terrified that I would go into my sister's room, my little sister, and the only way I would feel safe is if I would crawl into bed with her and we would hold the covers up over our heads.

Someone's ringing. Hello. Hello. So we hold the covers up over our heads. We don't know where the sounds are coming from.

So anyways, and when we do that, you know, I would go in there and I'd start to feel safe. I would feel safe underneath the covers. I'd be blocking out whatever I thought was the danger and holding onto my sister and thinking, very silly, of course, because the blanket isn't really going to protect me.

[28 : 10] But we'd be holed away, trying to protect ourselves. And we'd stay that way until finally dawn came. Finally the sun shone. Finally we knew with that light shining in that we can take that blanket down.

Hidden, protected, locked away. Had a barrier, a barrier between us. And whatever we thought was the upset. The beginning of this passage, the disciples are doing the same type of thing.

Not only physically hiding away behind a locked door, but spiritually as well. And we sometimes do the same thing. In our mind and in our heart we can lock ourselves away with our despair, our grief, our pain, our fear, our doubt, and our sin.

And lock ourselves up spiritually. And this story, this story actually happens on the day of resurrection. So in this story, it's still Easter Sunday.

And so much has happened. The cross was just a couple of days ago. There was agony and pain and suffering and death.

[29 : 24] Jesus was dead. Everything they had hoped for was dead. By this time Judas was dead now too, having died by suicide. Imagine the pain, the grieving, the confusion they had all been experiencing.

And then Mary Magdalene shows up and tells the disciples that Jesus in his body is missing. Missing. More confusion, more upset, probably even anger.

What is going on? It says that when John saw the empty tomb and the linens laying there, that he believed. But what about the other disciples?

What about the rest? Mary then sees Jesus and tells the disciples. Peter then sees Jesus. The two on the road to Emmaus. The two on the road to Emmaus then see Jesus.

And now it's Easter evening. Now they are gathered together and they're wrestling with this. So many different emotions all at the same time trying to sort it out.

[30 : 31] Some were there who had seen the risen Jesus. And some were there who had only seen Jesus dead. And they were hiding.

Locked up behind a door that was shut tight. And Jesus enters in. Luke describes the scene.

It says that they were startled. They were frightened. They were thinking that they had seen a ghost. If I were to write it, I would say they were freaking out. It's like Jesus, whoa! It's like, yeah!

Freaking out! Jesus entered in. Entered in. And they all were not all believing yet. But when Jesus entered in, in full body, he entered in in spite of the locked door, in spite of the barrier that they had made.

And he offered them his peace. Peace be with you. Shalom. Restoration. Wholeness. Wellness. Blessings with you.

[31 : 36] And he did this twice. Once in their original freak out. And he offered them assurance. And said, It's me. It's I, myself.

Touch me. See. Notice that they had the opportunity to not only see and touch Jesus. Peace. And yet, Jesus also offered peace a second time.

First with assurance and then with a mission. He said, As the Father sent me, I am sending you. And Jesus breathed on them. And he said, Receive the Holy Spirit.

And they were overjoyed. Sorrow and anguish turned to joy when Jesus entered in. And all the disciples were there.

Except for Thomas. So where was Thomas? Well, Thomas was not behind a locked door.

[32 : 39] But in some ways, he was behind a different kind of locked door. One that is bolted shut with doubt. Thomas would have been in Jerusalem because that's where they all were.

Going around in Jerusalem. And going around in Jerusalem, he would have heard the rumors. In Matthew 28, it says that the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened.

So the guards who were there at the tomb went and told the chief priests there was an earthquake and an angel and the stone rolled away and he wasn't there anymore.

He told them all of this stuff. And it says, When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money telling them, You're to say his disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.

And that's exactly what they did. They started spreading these rumors all around Jerusalem. Everyone's talking about it. Everybody's talking about it. And Thomas is in that atmosphere.

[33 : 53] He was in this atmosphere of rumors and maybe it was creating trust issues with the other disciples. I mean, I know I didn't steal away his body, but Judas died by suicide.

I don't know what's going on. Do I really know these people at all? No. Creating doubt in every way. Doubt. Not just whether or not it happened, but if it did happen, then what does that mean?

I mean, Thomas was the honest one who was willing to say, I don't get it. I don't understand. When Jesus had been teaching about going and preparing a place for them, Jesus said that they knew the way to the place where he was going.

And Thomas spoke up and said, Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way? To which Jesus responded, if you know it, say it, I am the way and the truth and the life.

Thomas tried to understand. And Thomas returns to the disciples, to his faith community. Thomas, who is brave, but unbelieving.

[35 : 10] Honest and wrestling in community. And the disciples are believing, but they're afraid. Thankfully, they were a safe place where Thomas could come with his doubt.

They were accepting of him, but they were still afraid. And Thomas, the brave one, he was actually noticing this, I believe.

I mean, he was brave enough to say when Jesus said, let's go to Jerusalem, all the disciples before them had said, no, no, it's too dangerous. We're not going to go. And it was Thomas who said, no, let's go with him, that we may die with him.

And now, the disciples' fear reinforces unbelief. I mean, the disciples are sharing and they're all excited that Jesus has risen from the dead.

Woo-hoo! But they're there in a locked room, locked behind closed doors. And I believe that worked in Thomas' mind.

[36 : 21] The life you are living is not testifying to what you're saying you believe. How can I believe this? The life you are living is not testifying to what you say you believe.

And they were all, all the disciples were in some way locked up, barricaded in, not fully free, just like many of us are as well.

Thomas would not believe unless he too could touch the risen Lord, experience his wounds. And Jesus waited a week before reappearing.

Time. Time in community. Time to safely wrestle with it. Time to be together. And in this time of wrestling and confusion and all of the upset, in all of this time, Jesus entered in again.

Peace be with you. And Jesus spoke directly to Thomas, addressing exactly what he had been troubling him. Jesus entered into the brokenness, to the anguish, to the despair, to the doubt that had kept Thomas' heart and mind from believing.

[37 : 46] He spoke to him. And so many times when people talk about what Jesus said to him, it sounds like scolding. Stop doubting.

You stop doubting. You believe. Knowing that Jesus knew the condition that they were in, the heart, the things that they were struggling with, the pain they were having, knowing Jesus' character, I don't believe that's how it was said at all.

I believe it was a gentle invitation, a reaching out with compassion. The actual Greek says, be not unbelieving, but believe.

A gentle invitation that also acknowledged that Jesus had already, all the time, been there. Jesus already knew the concerns on his heart, already there for him.

And now Jesus' presence is tangible. Tangible. And Thomas then knew not just that the resurrection had happened, but what it means.

[39 : 07] Everything Jesus said would happen, did. And Jesus was who he said he was.

And Thomas shouted out, shouted out, my Lord and my God. No quiet confession out of fear, but a bold proclamation of the truth as he experienced the risen Lord for himself.

my Lord and my God. He was the first one ever to say that Jesus was God. It's the highest confession of faith.

Confessing it out, testifying, Jesus, you are my Lord and my God. God. Verse 31 says, the whole gospel of John is written so that we will believe or continue to believe, continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and that by believing we may have life in his name.

Jesus breathed on them. Received the Holy Spirit. Breathed on them just as God did in the very beginning.

[40 : 36] In Genesis 2 it says, then the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life. And Jesus breathes into us the breath of life, of new life, fullness of life, life in Jesus' name.

Receive the Holy Spirit. Putting our doubt, our fear, our shame, our guilt, our discouragement, our disappointment, whatever doors we have closed and locked and we're hiding behind, we're putting it all behind us.

and unlocking those doors, flinging wide open those doors, breaking down those walls that have imprisoned us, unlocking the doors that have barricaded us in and stepping through the door into freedom because Jesus entered in.

Because Jesus breathes into us his divine breath of life renewed, restored, redeemed and through that we can dare through Jesus to have faith again, to have hope again, to love again.

Whatever the things we have struggled with, we can live again. Today is the day. New life built on God's truth that sets us free.

[42 : 14] that Jesus loves us, that Jesus died for us, that Jesus rose again victorious, overcoming all for us.

And Jesus reveals his wounds, the nails that he put into his hands and his feet, the spear into his side endured for us so that we do not have to live a life imprisoned in whatever area of our life we have ourselves locked into.

There isn't any door that we can hide behind where Jesus doesn't know. There isn't any door that we can lock that can keep Jesus out because Jesus enters in.

Let us pray. God, reveal to us the areas in our lives where we need to be set free, where we need to stop hiding, where we need healing, where we need to start believing, where we need to start living.

and Jesus our Lord, our God, Jesus, enter in.

[43 : 47] Amen, by your grace, Lord. Amen. Jesus enters in our Lord and our God behind any doors within ourselves and within our life and breathes into us peace.

be with you and sends us out through the open door, sends us out with power, with authority, with truth, with freedom.

Today is the day. Unlock those doors and go out. Choose to live boldly into the belief in the risen Lord.

Today is the day that we stand upon God's truth, being sent into the world to proclaim who Jesus is and how we have been set free.

No more fear, no more doubt, no more barriers of any kind, only Jesus who entered in, our Lord and our God.

- [44 : 54] Amen. Amen. One of the ways in which we get to experience closeness with God is by partaking in the sacrament which Jesus has left with us to remember him.
- So let us prepare our hearts as we come to the Lord's table. So we are going to open with a different prayer during this season and so be mindful as we follow along.
- Will you open yourselves to the grace of Jesus Christ that is always and already available here at this table? If so, say, open us to your grace, Lord.
- Open us to your grace, Lord. Will you open yourselves once again to the call of Jesus Christ? If so, say, open us to your call, Lord.
- Will you open yourselves to the possibility of transformation through Jesus Christ? If so, say, transform us, O Lord. As we prepare to attend the heavenly feast, we especially pray for those who have no earthly tables or no place at a table.
- [46 : 26] or so little daily bread. We confess this day that we have been slow to join the dance that brings life to all, brings love to all, brings sustenance to all.
- In silence, let us offer our own prayers of confession. Amen. Amen. Amen. Hear this good news.
- God has loved you from the very beginning. The invitation of Christ is never ending because resurrection can happen at any moment.
- The Holy Spirit is transforming you even now. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.
- Glory to God. Amen. The risen Lord be with you. And also with you. Lift up your hearts and voices. Lift up your hearts and voices.
- [47 : 45] Let us give great thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give our thanks and praise. Holy living one, you transformed a whole lot of nothing.
- Into this amazing creation. You breathed life all around and called it good. You invited us to the wonder of it all. And when we could not face you, you turned us around.
- You keep bringing us around and around, time and again. Offering the chance to join the freedom dance. And so we join with the glorious chorus of saints, past and present.
- Singing a never ending hymn of praise. Holy, holy, holy Lord. God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
- Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. Indeed, you are holy.
- [48 : 49] And blessed is your son, Jesus. The anointed one. The liberator. The dance partner. Our sibling. And our friend. Jesus sat at tables with those who had no place.
- And offered fulfilling food for bodies and souls. And on the night in which he would give all love for us.
- He sat at the table with the extended family. Just as he hosts this table here and now with this extended family. And he gave them this bread. He offered the usual prayers of thanks to you.
- Over bread and the cup. And then disrupted the gathering. Saying. Take and eat this bread. This is my body. Given for you.
- Whenever you gather around the table together. Do this. And remember me. Then he took the cup.
- [49 : 51] And he said. Take and drink from this. Each and every one of you. It's the sign of the new covenant. The darkness has given way to the light.
- The resurrection dance. Goes on. This love is poured out for all people. Whenever you gather around the table together. Do this.

And remember me. And so my friends. We remember. And we believe. Christ has died. Christ has risen.

Christ will come again. Pour out your Holy Spirit on us now. Pour out your transforming presence on the gift of this body. And the gifts of this bread.

And the fruit of the vine. May they be for us your life and love. Uniting us as one body. Christ's body. For the sake of loving the world.

[50 : 50] And now. Let us pray together. The prayer that Jesus taught us to pray. Our Father. Our Father. Who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done. On earth. As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses.

As we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom. And the power.

And the glory. Forever. Ever. Amen. This table extends beyond this physical space. Into the space of the spirit. That unites us.

May this meal ready us to love. Trust. Hope. And dance. To the beat. Of God's heart. I invite you all now to remove your mass. Take your chalice.

[51 : 51] And open up the side that has the bread on it. And know that this. Is the body of Christ. Which is given for you. Take now and receive.

Amen. Amen. And I invite you to open the other side. And know that this.

Is the blood of Christ. Which is shed for you. Take now and receive. May we all.

Know the blessing of God's gift to us. In these elements. As we. Continue to remember. The victory. Of our risen Lord. Jesus the Christ.

Amen. Amen. Please stand if you're able.

[53 : 07] Today is the day. I'm casting my cares.

aside. I'm leaving my last behind. I'm setting my heart and mind on you, Jesus. I'm reaching my hands to yours. You're leaving there so much more. Knowing that all you have in store for me is good. It's good. Today is the day you have made. I will rejoice and be glad in it.

Today is the day you have made. I will rejoice and be glad in it. But I won't worry about tomorrow. I'm trusting in what you say. Day is the day. Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh.

I'm putting my fears aside. I'm leaving my doubts behind. I'm giving my hopes and dreams to you, Jesus, reaching my hand to yours, you're leaving so much more, knowing that all you have in store for me is done, is done.

Today is the day you have made, I will rejoice and be glad in it.

[55 : 20] I won't worry about tomorrow, I'm trusting in what you say, today is the day. Today is the day.

I will stand up on your truth, all my days I live for you.

I will stand up on your truth, all my days I live for you.

And all my days I live. Today is the day you have made, I will rejoice and be glad in it.

Today is the day you have made, I will rejoice and be glad in it. And I won't worry about tomorrow, I'm giving you my fears and sorrows.

[56 : 30] Where you lead me, I will follow, trust in what you say. Today is the day. Today is the day. Today is the day. Today is the day. Today is the day. Today is the day.

Today is the day. Today is the day. Today is the day. amen we're gonna break it up so we're saying today is the day and I'm seeing a lot of closed doors today is the day let's oh let's go we're saying we're gonna dance out in this world we're gonna dance and rejoice and proclaim because Jesus has entered in amen amen and so let's start hearing those testimonies how has God changed you how has God renewed you how has God healed you share it lift it up go set breathe into the breath of life because Jesus entered in and so with the divine breath of God continue to walk boldly through those doors and bless the world with God's truth amen you

Thank you.

Thank you.