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Jessica: We are sparking your thoughts for Sunday as you plan your sermon or teaching lesson. I'm your host and producer, Jessica Bordeleau, here with Dr. David Schmitt and Dr. Peter Nafzger. They are both professors of homiletics here at Concordia Seminary St. Louis. You can hear all about us in our introductory episode, but trust me, they are pretty good preachers. All right, let's get started. David, where are we in the church here?

David: It is Easter Sunday.

Jessica: Happy Easter!
Oh, He is risen.

Jessica: He is risen.

Peter: Hallelujah!

David: I know, it is wonderful. It is Easter Sunday celebration of our Lord's resurrection.

Jessica: And what are the texts for this week, Peter?

Peter: The texts are from Isaiah 25, 1 Corinthians 15, Mark 16, and Psalm 16.

Jessica: As always, I ask each of you to tell me which text you would choose to preach about. To determine who goes first this week, I want to know what kinds of things you got in your Easter basket when you were a kid.

David: Always got a chocolate bunny. Man, I love that chocolate bunny. And I hated it when they were hollow. I wanted that solid chocolate bunny. Yes.

Jessica: Do you start eating at the ears or at the feet?

David: At the ears. Yes. And then I run around with it. I can't hear, I can't hear. I still do that today.

Peter: He does that on campus.

Jessica: Oh, give me a second.

Peter, what would you get in your Easter basket?

Peter: I remember getting the Reese's peanut butter cup eggs. At least I liked those. I liked those more than the solid chocolate bunny even.

Jessica: All right, David, you win because I used to get the hollow Easter bunnies as well. So you win and you get to go first.

David: Great. So I am going to preach on Mark 16 verses one through eight, the Gospel for Easter. And you know, Easter always poses this challenge in preaching because the service is usually over the top, right? You've got lilies, you've got trumpets, you've got choirs, you've got these wonderful hymns and usually, you know.

Peter: A full house.

David: A full house. I mean, it's so, it is so good. And I think sometimes as a preacher, I was tempted to try to mirror or be at the same level as the service so that, so that this Easter sermon has to be a home run. It has to be so strong and powerful. And the older I get, I think that actually what is really nice balance is to have a very personal sermon on Easter that's not over the top so that you've got this wonderful celebration of the service. But at the heart of it, at the heart of it,

you've got a very simple, very powerful, but personal kind of witnessing testimony sharing of the message of salvation and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. So for me, Mark's Easter account is a perfect Easter account for a personal lower key, I guess you could say. I mean, because you know, you think about, so like think about sunrises, right? What do you think the sunrise was like on Easter morning? I mean, some sunrises are bright, clear, beautiful. You see this amazing sun with all this glorious colors as it's rising over the horizon and other sunrises, the sky is like over clouded and overcast and you can't even see the sun, but it gets a little brighter so you assume it's there. That's the kind of Easter I think Mark has in the Gospel reading. It's not the spectacular, you know, guards fall down, struck as dead with the tomb bursting open and you know, everything happening. It's much more subdued as these women go to the tomb. So, Jessica, if you could read the point where they enter the tomb, verses five through eight.

Jessica: And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side dressed in a white robe and they were alarmed. And he said to them, do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who is crucified. He has risen. He's not here. See the place where they laid him, but go tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him just as he told you. And they went out and fled from the tomb for trembling and astonishment had seized them. And they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid.

David: Right. So, it kind of ends with this, this awe, this fear of these women and their silence as they're running away from this tomb. So, it's not kind of a spectacular ending. And yet it is the telling of the resurrection of Jesus, but it's just a little bit more muted. And so, for me, kind of my theme, I guess my title would be something like what Jesus left behind, dot, dot, dot. So, what Jesus left behind. So, he rose from the dead. He's kind of no longer in the tomb, but he did leave something behind. And the way Mark tells it is it ends with this holy silence. And, you know, in a sense, it makes sense historically with Mark. Mark being written to Roman Christians undergoing persecution, possibly. And so, you find people who are in a holy silence as kind of the world around them has turned against them. And they're, you know, they're there in this silence and reverence and get knowledge of the resurrection of Jesus. And, you know, actually, when when Voelz had us do the Gospel of Mark thing, he actually translates the ending, you know, they were afraid, you know, because, you know, the particle *gar* is at the end is afraid, you know, as if, you know, Mark is speaking to people who know what it's like to be afraid, both afraid in terms of persecution and afraid in fear and awe of the resurrection of this Christ.

Peter: And Mark doesn't have the women see Jesus.

David: No. They see this. That's why it's a cloudy morning.

Peter: Right.

David: You know, but the sun is there.

Peter: I mean, even you think about the other Gospels where Mary, you know, does encounter Jesus, she's still crying. And she's still, until she sees him.

David: She thinks she's the gardener. Right.

Peter: So, there is this ambiguity, and this is what's hard to recreate for here's today, because we all know the rest of the story.

David: Right.

Jessica: And we know the story from these other perspectives. I think sitting in the pew, it would be helpful for you to say, these all are true. This all happened. The authors are telling it from a different perspective and including different details. Otherwise, I think some, yeah, sometimes people are like, well, this one says that, that one says that. So, it's not that true.

David: It's not a pick your own adventure.

Jessica: It's not accurate. Right. Right. So, I know that's not the point of your sermon, but kicking that in there might be a little bit helpful. So, it doesn't raise doubts.

David: Right. Yeah. Yeah. So, the theme would be what Jesus left behind. And I think the first thing to say is that Jesus left behind an angel, a witness in a tomb. And just think about that. You know, you're going to a tomb that's empty. You're going to assume that somebody has stolen the body. They've already desecrated him by crucifying and placing on a cross. And you know, what more are they going to do? Drag the body through the streets? What, you know, what more are they going to do to Jesus? And yet, when Jesus rises from the tomb, he leaves somebody there, somebody there to talk to you. And it, you know, Christ has risen from the dead. He's conquered every, every sin, every suffering, every evil death itself. And he's bringing about a new creation. So, there is nothing, there is no place of suffering or evil or hurt that God cannot be there, because he has conquered and rules over it all. And so, one of the things you see here is that we trust that Jesus will leave behind a witness. No matter what you're going through in your life, there will be someone there, because our Lord rules over all things, and he has left someone behind to talk to you. So, these, whatever's going on in your life, you know, whatever those things are, we have a God who leaves a person behind to have a message for you. So, that would be the first thing.

Peter: What I think is kind of helpful about that is the angel was left behind for the women.

David: Right.

Peter: It was specifically for these visitors to the tomb. It was witnessed for them. And I think you could be really personal there.

David: Right.

Peter: Like you're saying.

David: Right. He left somebody behind for these women. And the person he left behind knows what they're experiencing. I mean, look at the first words. Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the one who was crucified. So, this person knows what you're going through. Jesus Christ himself has taken on the punishment of sin. He has taken on suffering and death itself. He understands. He knows what we're going through. And he's leaving behind someone who will speak to you, who knows what you're going through. And a person who gives you a word. So, you know, notice how it's, you know, there you will see him just as he told you. Right. So, the angel recognizes that Jesus has given the disciples words about what he is going to do after his resurrection. He's going to see them in Galilee. And this word of Jesus can be depended on. Throughout the Gospel of Mark, everything that Jesus said would happen, happened. Right. And he's predicted that he's going to die. He's predicted he's going to rise. And so, the fact that he has risen, this is a fulfillment of his word. And so, this Jesus who can enter into all suffering has a word for people in all suffering, a word of promise that they can hold on to with all certainty that it's going to transpire.

And then the last thing would be he leaves behind, he leaves behind a person who knows what you're going through, who gives you a word, and who brings you into community. This young man sends the women out to go see Peter and the disciples. Right. So, they're not going to be alone on this journey. They're going to be part of the community of faith. And they're going to be with that community of faith as they live in this word of promise, as they encounter Jesus in other places in the world. And so, that would be kind of a simple sermon that I would work with.

Peter: You could use a little alliteration there. He leaves behind a person, a promise, and a people.

Jessica: Oh, nice.

Peter: He's not leaving alone. And all those, what's nice about it is those are all things that Mark doesn't give us physical body Jesus.

David: Right. He does not.

Peter: And he doesn't give our congregations that either.

David: Right.

Peter: He doesn't, Jesus is not back yet. But he still gives us a person to witness who knows us. He still gives us a promise of his final return and resurrection of the dead. And he still gives us a people to go through life with.

David: Right. And so, Easter is more than a celebration of one day.

It's a life. It's a life that with this God who has left you a person, a promise, and a people. That would be kind of the thought behind that sermon.

Peter: I can see how that could be a real personal.

David: Yes.

Peter: Kind of because you're sharing your heart.

David: Right.

Peter: And your witness with the congregation.

David: Yeah.

Jessica: Peter, what about you? What would you preach on?

Peter: Well, I couldn't resist the Isaiah passage.

David: That is such a beautiful passage.

Peter: Isaiah 25 is so encouraging, so filled with images and kind of inspiring. And so, it captures, in some ways it surpasses all the, you know, you talk about with Mark kind of a muted sermon.

David: Right.

Peter: In some ways this text surpasses even the most glorious Easter Sunday service. I don't care how good your Easter breakfast is.

David: It's not going to be as good as this.

Peter: There's not going to be rich food and well-aged wine, I'm guessing.

But so, the imagery of this text to me is so compelling. And I think it could provide a way to preach a sermon for Easter Sunday.

So, would you start, Jessica, by reading verses six through eight?

Jessica: On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, and of aged wine well-refined.

Peter: All right. As I was reading through this several times, and I was thinking about these images of the feast and the covering and the tears, what started to stand out to me was how many times the word all was used in these verses. Did you notice that as you were reading it?

Jessica: Oh, yes. Yes.

Peter: In verse six, for all the peoples, in verse seven, covering cast over all the peoples, veil spread over all the nations. Verse eight, wipe away tears from all the faces, and the reproach of his people he'll take away from all the earth. And it made me think of all the things. Have you guys heard people using that phrase recently? It seems like, I don't know if people use it in the blogosphere a lot, but the phrase all the things.

Jessica: Oh, for sure. Yes. I can't do all the things.

Peter: Yeah. And we're on vacation and we did all the things. So all the things is just a phrase that I've heard. And it came to my mind as I looked at all the words all in this reading. And so I kind of wanted to think about how Easter affects and impacts and shapes all the things. This is a Sunday that impacts everything in our lives. And so I thought I would, if I would kind of just follow the movement of this text, if I were going to organize a sermon and I would start with this feast for all the peoples, a feast for all the peoples. Of course, at Easter time, you're thinking about all sorts of feasts, right? Some of us have parties where we invite all the people to our homes. You have all the stuff at the Easter breakfast. We always had at my congregation in Minnesota, big Easter breakfast before the service. And you had all the things at breakfast. You think about the feast that is the Lord's supper, where the Lord provides all the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection for us in that meal. And so I'm thinking about all these things, a feast for all the people. But I'm also thinking about the fact that all the people, even though it's really full, usually in Easter Sunday, not all the people are here. And so there's this longing and a missing. There's, you know, people have children that didn't make it home. You have people who didn't, who no longer belong to the congregation, who maybe have fallen away. And as wonderful as it is to celebrate all the people at church on Easter Sunday, there's still some missing. That all the peoples is a wonderful, comforting thing, and yet we don't see it now. And you just mentioned somebody who lost a loved one. That's kind of where the next part goes. He will swell up on this mountain, the covering that is cast over all the people's veils spread over all the nations. This is a very important part of the story. Covering this veil, I think you can make a connection there, to death that still covers, the wages of sin that still remains.

David: I just love the contrast. So it's this big feast, and now what's our Lord eating? He's swallowing up death. Yeah, we're eating the best wines, the best food, and what is he doing? He's eating up death for us.

Peter: The image of Jesus consuming and taking in, and the death forever. So just before we came to record this podcast today, I got an email from my dad that said my cousin, his cousin, my second cousin once removed, from Switzerland died just a week or so ago. Hans is his name. And he's been an ocean apart, so we haven't interacted with him a whole lot, but we've been over there to visit them. He's one of the most cheerful. He was a shepherd. A Swiss lived way up high in the mountains, and he had sheep. And I just learned that Hans died. And as I was looking at this text, I was reminded not only of my cousin, but I was reminded of all the people who will be there at Easter, who, I mean, you guys know this, when a loved one dies, you never stop missing them.

David: Right. Right.

Peter: You never stop mourning. And they say that funerals are good times to bring up

Easter. I think Easter is actually a good time to bring up funerals too, where we think about, and this is where it kind of relates to the all peoples, the all nations, the death that is there, it impacts all of us. And so there is this longing and this missing that I think it maybe is helpful to name on Easter for those people for whom that pain is still very real. So the feast for all the peoples, swallowing of death for all the nations, and then verse eight, the Lord will wipe away tears from all the faces.

Jessica: That's great.

David: I know.

Jessica: Oh, isn't that hopeful and exciting?

David: It is. Yeah.

Peter: I picture a little child, a little boy who is very sad about something. Maybe he lost a game or maybe he lost a pet or maybe he fell and hurt himself. And the child that runs to his mom's arms with tears running down his face and the mom embraces him.

Jessica: You're killing me.

Peter: And moms can console and that's why children run to their moms, but Jesus wipes or, but God in this text wipes away tears from all faces. And so those people who are maybe, and this is where the sermon I think could build, there's the feast and yet we're missing some people. Why are we missing some of them? Well, because of that veil, the death that has not yet been swallowed up for all people and then the tears that flow from that and other forms of loss.

David: Well, and yeah, I mean, and the promise that Christ has swallowed up death for you and for your loved one, but I'm still living in a time period where I have tears.

Peter: But the sting still remains.

David: Right. The sting still remains, I'm still crying. And yet now all of a sudden it's getting very personal that those tears, he'll wipe those away too. And the fact that when you think about it on that last day with all of this stuff, that God would notice a tear. I mean, that's amazing. That is amazing.

Peter: Yeah. And now I'm thinking it's not in the Mark text, but Mary, when she does encounter Jesus in his tears, but just that personal nature of wiping away tears.

David: Right. Yeah.

Peter: And so I, this, all the things, all the things in life that make this wonderful celebration on Easter still not quite, it's not quite perfect. It's still, we're still missing something. But this promise, so these promises become so easy to proclaim for each one of these, this feast that all the people will be welcome at, the death that will be completely wiped away and the joy that will result. That's kind of where the Psalm, or not the Psalm, that's kind of where Isaiah 25 verse nine goes. And so would you read verse nine as well, Jessica?

Jessica: It will be said on that day, behold, this is our God. We have waited for Him that He might save us. This is the Lord. We have waited for Him. Let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation.

Peter: That last line, let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation. All the things that God promises through Isaiah, what do they lead to? Well, they lead to joy. We are glad and we rejoice, even though now through tears, we still rejoice. I was just reading the other day, a sermon by Fred Craddock. I don't know if you remember the sermon. It's called Doxology. It's really a nice sermon. It's not perfect. It needs to be a little bit more clear on the gospel, but the sermon is about how doxology is a character. And he kind of walks through how

sometimes we forget to bring along doxology where we go.

Jessica: What do you mean by doxology? What does that mean?

Peter: Well, the doxology in the sermon is kind of a praise to God, just rejoicing and praising God for what he has done. And so, it says doxology is welcome at the dinner table at the end of the day. As you talk about what God has provided, doxology is actually welcome. When you run your errands and you see something praiseworthy day in, day out. He talks about doxology is always welcome on vacation because it's beautiful and it's wonderful. But then he tells a story about going to visit a cancer patient and he feels like he should leave doxology in the car and he locks it in the trunk. And then he gets and visits this woman who's a terminally ill cancer patient and she has doxology with her. And she witnesses to him the praise. And then he tells a story, kind of wraps up the sermon by telling about when his brother died and he goes to visit his sister-in-law. And the first thing she asks him when he gets out of the car is, well, you brought doxology with you, didn't you? And he says, no, I didn't. I left it at home. And it kind of invites at least this perspective, this Easter perspective that leads us to bring joy and to rejoice, to bring doxology everywhere, everywhere we go and to every wonderful situation and every terribly hard situation. These promises that are all fulfilled in Christ and that await Christ's people when he returns. These promises of God and Isaiah allow us to bring joy and to rejoice in all the things.

Jessica: Thanks guys. That's all for today. We have free resources to guide your next step in planning at ConcordiaTheology.org. While you're there, you'll also find episodes of our other new podcast, *Tangible: Theology Learned and Lived*. Twice a month, I get to host conversations with faculty members here at Concordia Seminary, and we talk about the ways in which their understanding of God and their faith is real in their everyday lives. The show is for anyone who wants to deepen their theology through engaging conversation. You can find more episodes of *Lectionary Kickstart* and *Tangible* on all of the major podcast apps. If you'd like to see this show continue, please subscribe, share, and leave a review. It really makes a difference. I'm your host and producer, Jessica Bordeleau. Join us next week here at *Lectionary Kickstart* when Dr. David Schmitt and Dr. Peter Nafzger will spark your thoughts for next Sunday.

David: Always got a chocolate bunny. Yes. And then I run around with it. I can't hear. I can't hear. I still do that.