

Community Church of Issaquah  
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He Has Risen. Now What?  
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There are two words that we use so often in response to a life situation that we seldom think about. I say them silently or in my mind so often and never stop to think about it or say them out loud. Do you know what those two words are? Let me share them as the theme for today's message. Are you ready? Here they are: "Now What?" From the simplest of things to the most complex, we use that two-word question more often than we can imagine.

Perhaps we've gone to the supermarket to buy something specific but find that the shelf where it should be is empty. Our mind jumps to the question, "Now what am I going to buy?" Or our car has a problem, and we can't get it started so that we can go wherever we have planned. With our hands on our hips, we ask ourselves, "Now what am I going to do?" Or even a simple thing like you've begun to prepare a dish or dessert for dinner and realized that you are missing one of the main ingredients and you don't have time to zip to the store to solve the problem. Instead, you stand there in the kitchen and ask yourself, "Now what?" That's our use of the two-word question.

We have just finished with the Easter celebration that honors the resurrection of Jesus Christ. When the angels in the tomb said, "He is risen. He is risen indeed," it led to some of those present at that time to wonder about the circumstances and the future. They surely asked

themselves, “Now what?” Let’s think about those that the Scripture talks about.

Suppose you were one of the women who had mentally and physically prepared to go to the tomb where they assumed his body lay. They were ready to cleanse and wrap Jesus’s body before it was closed in the tomb. But there were two figures inside the tomb asking them why they were there looking for Jesus. “He isn’t here, he is risen,” they were told. I can envision them turning to each other and asking, “Now what are we supposed to do?” The first thing that came to mind was to run to the hiding place where the disciples were and tell them what they had been told. Imagine their shock when they met Jesus on the road as they hurried away from the tomb. His request was for them to go to the disciples, or as Jesus called them, his brothers, and tell them to go to Galilee where they would see Jesus. Sadly, they weren’t believed until some of the disciples went to the tomb and realized the women were telling the truth. But what were they to do after they had told the disciples? What now? We don’t know the answer to that since none of the Gospels finishes that story.

In a state of disbelief about finding the tomb of Jesus empty, the guards who had been assigned to watch over this body hurried to the chief priests at the temple – not to the Roman rulers – to tell them what they had found. There were the religious leaders who had pushed for the crucifixion of Christ asking themselves, “Now what?” So they met with the congregational leaders called the elders, and a plan was put into place. The ‘what now’ was for the guards to receive a good bit of money and they were

instructed to tell everyone that the disciples had come and stolen the body. The guards were assured that if the word of things that happened was known including that the guards had not done well standing guard, the priests would cover for them and all would be well. The 'what now' plan worked. The lie of the story the religious leaders wanted told was spread all over and all the Jews believed it.

And then there were the disciples, faced with great uncertainties about their future. For years they had ridden on the hem of Jesus's cloak, following the teacher and trying to follow the teachings of the rabbi. Now the teacher is gone, and they were left alone without a leader. It seems easy to view them sitting in that upper room asking each other, "Now what?" that question was answered for them when Jesus appeared to them and continued his teaching for a very short time before he ascended into heaven and disappeared. The calling seemed to be so clear – "go and make disciples of every nation." From asking, "what now" to being told 'now what' you are to do is what Jesus told them. Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." There was certainly no reason to even think of asking "What now?" Jesus answered that.

That leaves just us now. We know for sure that Christ is risen indeed. Of that any believer has no doubt. But yet each of us must answer the question "what now?" for ourselves. Now that Easter is over; now that we've heard the story of the resurrection again for the hundredth time; and now that we move away from the message and story of

the final days of the life of Christ and the reappearance of the resurrected Jesus, what do we do with that message? Each of us might ask ourselves that question “what now.” How do we take the joy of a risen Lord and help it to have meaning in our life?

Perhaps we can reverse the two words from what now to a more meaningful two words for us, ‘now what.’ For me, following the Lenten Season and the joy of the return to life of Christ, I tell myself, “Now what I want to do is let that reality that Jesus conquered death even after sacrificing his own life to pay the price for our redemption and the promise of life after death. Now what I want to do is live the life Christ hopes for us. I want to make disciples of others so they can join us in our faith. Now what I want is for this church to hear the teachings of Jesus and follow those in a world that challenges us in so many ways. Now what? That’s what. Be the church of God. And do it with great joy, repeating the news to the world, “Christ is risen. He is risen indeed.”