



Sermon Discussion Guide

“What Looks Like Defeat” – James Junior

March 29th, 2026

If you've been in the church for a while, we can have a tendency to rush to Easter... to the resurrection. Let's not rush. Let's sit in this passage about the crucifixion today... this week even. As James pointed out in his sermon, it was a Roman centurion who first recognized Jesus as the Son of God in the crucifixion scene. Not only was he a gentile, but he was also making this declaration before the resurrection! This centurion recognized God in Jesus's act of dying on the cross. This feels important.

Hook - Getting to know one another

- How is everyone doing this week?
- Easter is coming up. What are some Easter traditions you have ... either from your childhood, or that you have now, or that you'd like to have?

Book – Scripture - Read Mark 15:33-39

*Jesus had told the disciples that he was going to die and rise again (**Matt. 16:21-23; Mark 9:30-32; Luke 18:31-33**). But, as James mentioned, the disciples often had “blurry vision”... they didn't really understand. (In fact, in Luke it explicitly says, “But they understood nothing about all these things.”)*

- Throughout Jesus's trial and march to the cross, don't you think the disciples hoped and believed that he might pull some miracle out of his sleeve and get himself out of this mess? At what point in the saga do you think they realized that Jesus was indeed going to die? Was it during the trial? The march to Golgotha? When the cross was lifted up with Jesus on it? When he actually died?
- The Roman centurion recognized in Jesus's act of dying on the cross that this was a holy moment: “Surely this man was the Son of God.” What was he seeing? What did he realize about Jesus in this moment?
- It's easy to see the resurrection as a powerful divine act. But the centurion saw something holy and powerful in Jesus's suffering and death. Why is that important for us to remember?



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Look - Connections to our world today

- *Traditionally, the day between the crucifixion and Easter Sunday is called Holy Saturday. The disciples sat through Holy Saturday not knowing with any certainty that Jesus would rise again. We, who have history to tell us that he did, can easily skip the pain of Holy Saturday. We often rush to the victory of Easter.*
- What important part of the death of Jesus do we miss if we rush to Easter?
- A lot of people are living a life of missing the significance of Jesus's suffering and death. That means they suffer alone. Can you name how people are living alone in their suffering today?
- What is the church's mission for these people who suffer alone?

Took - Personal Application

The surprise of Easter, the joy of salvation, the immensity of God's love for us becomes more clear to us when we realize and remember what we have been saved from.

- Can you remember what you have been saved from? The suffering? The aloneness? The slavery?
- Who can you think of in your own life who might be suffering alone? Who does not realize that Jesus suffered too as an act of divine love?
- Not just other people in your life ... how are you still suffering alone? What areas of your life have you not let the suffering Jesus into? In what ways do you still need to experience the divine love of a God who came to suffer for us?

Time of Prayer - Pray over these areas in your own life and others'.