



Community is shaped by the conversations we share. These questions are just a tool to help you meaningfully engage with the themes of this week's teaching.

Discussion Questions

Scriptures: Luke 24:41-43, Acts 1:7-8, Luke 24:50-53

Summary: This week, we consider the intersection of joy with the final moments of Jesus' time on earth.

Banter. Bobbi shares a story about praying to be better at banter and how, over time, she found herself engaging in joyful conversations that exceeded her expectations. Through these experiences, she came to see banter not just as witty exchanges but as a way to connect deeply with others and even with the divine. Bobbie sums up her learning like this: "I could have easily thought that banter wasn't for me – that I wasn't good at it, and I should just let it go. But there's stagnancy in staying comfortable in a story you think you know. No, it's better to find the edges of ourselves and to push past premature endings."

Astonishing conversations. Luke 24:41-43. *"There's the story, and there's what the story is trying to do."* Luke tells us the story of how Jesus meets his disciples in their initial confusion about the resurrection, then their amazement and finally their joy. And what Luke is trying to do with this story is to shape a Christology that addresses the questions and worries of early Christians: resurrection involved Jesus' whole body (he asked for food), Peter and the direct witnesses of the resurrection are the leaders of the church now, and it is still a Jewish story but it has also become something more. We hear this story in and through conversations, and we need each other and these kinds of astonishing conversations to shape a spirituality that grapples with meaning, purpose and connection and is also shot through with joy.

Joy in your spirituality. Acts 1:7-8 In Acts, Jesus redirects his followers' focus from nostalgic hopes for a restored kingdom towards a future filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, a future meant for the whole world. Bobbi proposes that a major aspect of joy is that joy is not something we control, and it's hardly a thing of the past. Joy is about newness and discovery. And if we take a good look at our own spiritual life, we will see how open-ended and

available to discovery it is. Our serious attitude toward our religion and spirituality was shaped by the messages that taught us that those are serious things. Jesus, however, invites us into a joyful engagement with life.

Ascension. Luke 24:50–53 The disciples' journey from disbelief to joy culminates in a celebratory scene as Jesus ascends to heaven, blessing them before departing. It is important to remember that joy has a continuous presence throughout Jesus' story; it was there in the beginning and is here at the end. The story of ascension is a story of prophetic typology. We have seen it before in the story of Elijah and Elisha in 2 Kings. Elijah ascended into heaven, and a double portion of his spirit was given to Elisha. Jesus ascended into heaven and is now present with us everywhere and all the time, but what's more important is that we were also given the Spirit. We have all we need to experience joy and to spread it.

Connect. How comfortable are you with banter? What gives you joy about it, and what makes you unsure? Has your view of banter changed, and/or how did you work on getting better at it? (Or maybe you've always been incredible at it – tell us more!)

Share. Bobbi quoted the essayist Hanif Abdurraqib, who says, "Joy in a violent world can be a rebellion." Share your thoughts on this perspective and how joy acted as a form of rebellion in your life or maybe as the pathway to divine truth.

Alternatively, talk about the connection between joy and spirituality in your life. How has embracing humour and joy in your faith journey deepened your own understanding of Christ?

What role does joy (or, to be more precise, finding joy in simple, often physical things of life, like eating a piece of fish or breaking a loaf of fresh bread) play in your Christology?

Reflect. Consider the disciples' nostalgia for the kings and kingdoms (which has the potential to steal joy) and Jesus' challenge to move forward into the unknown future.

What do you think about these two thoughts from the sermon:

"I want to propose that a major aspect of joy is that joy is not something we control, and it's hardly a thing of the past. Joy is about newness and discovery."

And

"If your faith, your spiritual practice, your walk with Jesus doesn't feel joyful at least some of the time, I don't want to say you're doing something wrong because I don't think it's on you.

We're often told that religion is so serious,

And Jesus came to save your soul and everything else is unimportant.

And here's what we say to that –

Who invented fun?

Who laughed at death?

Who pranked his friends right to the very end?

Jesus brings life, and life is supercharged with joy."

What is one way how you try to stay open to discovery?

Engage. Consider the ascension and this idea of prophetic typology: how the story of Elijah and Elisha is also the story of Jesus and his disciples, and how it is also the story of Christ and the church, our story. It's a story of universality and not abandonment.

How does this view of the ascension encourage us to find Christ in all places and in all people? What implications does this have for how we live out our faith in a diverse and interconnected world?

What do you think is the role of the Spirit in our experience of joy? Or maybe even our practice of joy?

Take away. What are some of the sacred, joyful places where you can linger together as a group, or maybe you alone, can linger this week?
What are some of the ways how we can cultivate a community that values and creates space for shared spiritual experiences and joy?

Prayer from the sermon.

Loving God,
Nothing is hidden from you.
In our lives are great pains and losses
In our world is great tragedy and confusion
So often we feel lost and lonely

And still, we are given holy gifts
Like love
And celebration
And joy
And we do nobody any good when we refuse them.

Jesus, won't you give us a sense of your laughter today
We imagine the crinkle of your eyes when you smiled
The pride you felt for your friends
The trust you offer us to carry on being your peace in the world

Spirit of the living God, present with us now,
Enter the places of our need and longing,
And heal us with joy we pray. Amen.