

for the 3rd Sunday of Easter, April 26, 2020

Good Morning to all on this joyous Third Sunday of Easter, of the year 2020. We don't know exactly when we will be back together in one place to worship, but it does seem that we might not have to wait too much longer. Because we want to be cautious for the sake of one another and our neighbors and friends, we will look for guidance from the governor and the health department. We will get the word out to everyone as soon as we possibly can.

Christ is Risen! HE IS RISEN INDEED!!

The Holy Gospel according to Luke, the 24th chapter, verses 13 through 35.

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹³ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.

¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad.

¹⁸ Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" ¹⁹ He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ *But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.* Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him."

²⁵ Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them.

³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, "*Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?*" ³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and *how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.*

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

I have to say that this story from Luke is one of my favorites of the Easter appearances. Rather personal to me is how Jesus gives, what one of my seminary professors was fond of saying, the first Christian seminary lesson personally to these two disciples. What a gracious privilege they received!

They also represent, more so than the eleven, the 'typical' Christian of the centuries that follow as well as the common, everyday person in today's world. Although we are told one of their names, they are not the appointed apostles (the inner circle), they were understandably confused and disappointed when Jesus was seemingly defeated by the religious and political leaders, they were trying to understand what to make of the tragic events they had witnessed, and they were open to learning from scripture what God had been up to.

Finally, in their experience, we see displayed the central meaning of our Christian worship. Two travelers who are discussing together their spiritual experiences, centered around scripture and what God was doing in their world, share a meal that reveals the identity and presence of Christ and then are sent out to share and live that good news (gospel) with the world.

Remember how John closes his gospel with Jesus' words to Thomas ("Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe") that are really meant for the new Christian community and to us? In similar fashion, Luke includes this encounter of two (minor) disciples with Jesus so that all that would read his gospel then, as well as the countless others that have and will read it in time to come, will know that in Christian worship you will be in the very real presence of the risen Christ!

Notice how Luke portrays their despair when they say to Jesus, "*But we had hoped that he was the one who would redeem Israel*". Although the Lord patiently listens to their complaints,

he very clearly rebukes them for not knowing the scriptures that explain God's plan and their resistance to the larger impact that it is intended to accomplish.

However, in his company, they do listen with new understanding, putting aside what they thought that they knew, to see the perfect alignment between what had been foretold and what had actually happened. As their gloom was lifted and their excitement grew, they eagerly prolonged their time in his presence until his identity was revealed in the breaking of bread at the table. As we see in Acts 2:42, 46 this became the regular practice wherever the believers met and was seen as central to the life and growth of the Christian community.

It does seem ironic that we are now being denied this core experience due to the pandemic. However, we know that just as Jesus' presence is more than physical, so we also can be assured that our unity is not threatened nor our strength diminished by our practicing social distance of 6 feet or 6 miles.

I pray that God will help us to defeat this virus. I pray that God will bless everyone's efforts to help one another. And I pray that more and more people throughout the world will be drawn to the love and mercy of our Lord Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Pastor Clark

Just as we will have an Easter Sunday Celebration when we first get together again, we will probably want to be sure to have a Holy Hilarity Sunday to follow it. As sort of a preview, I thought I would share this story once told by Darren Ethier:

"The call to worship had just been pronounced starting Easter Sunday Morning service in an East Texas church. The choir started its processional, singing 'Up from the Grave He Arose' as they marched in perfect step down the center aisle to the front of the church. The last lady was wearing shoes with very slender heels.

"Without a thought for her fancy heels, she marched toward the grating that covered that hot air register in the middle of the aisle. Suddenly the heel of one shoe sank into the hole in the register grate. In a flash she realized her predicament. Not wishing to hold up the whole processional, without missing a step, she slipped her foot out of her shoe and continued marching down the aisle. There wasn't a hitch. The processional moved with clock-like precision. The first man after her spotted the situation and without losing a step, reached down and pulled up her shoe, but the entire grate came with it! Surprised, but still singing, the man kept on going down the aisle, holding in his hand the grate with the shoe attached.

"Everything still moved like clockwork. Still in tune and still in step, the next man in line stepped into the open register and disappeared from sight. The service took on a special meaning that Sunday, for just as the choir ended with 'Allelujah! Christ arose!' a voice was heard under the church shouting...'I hope all of you are out of the way 'cause I'm coming out now!'

The little girl closest to the aisle shouted, 'Come on, Jesus! We'll stay out of the way'.