

April 26, 2020 Scripture and Sermon  
Luke 24:13-35

*Luke 24:13-35 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)*

<sup>13</sup> Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles<sup>[a]</sup> from Jerusalem, <sup>14</sup> and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. <sup>15</sup> While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, <sup>16</sup> but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. <sup>17</sup> And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>18</sup> 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?" <sup>19</sup> He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth,<sup>[c]</sup> who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, <sup>20</sup> and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. <sup>21</sup> But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.<sup>[d]</sup> Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. <sup>22</sup> Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> 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." <sup>25</sup> Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! <sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary that the Messiah<sup>[e]</sup> should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" <sup>27</sup> Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

<sup>28</sup> As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. <sup>29</sup> But 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. <sup>30</sup> When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. <sup>31</sup> Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. <sup>32</sup> They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us<sup>[f]</sup> while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" <sup>33</sup> That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. <sup>34</sup> They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" <sup>35</sup> Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Way back when; before delving into the world of Word and sacrament, and being called to serve as the pastor of St. James, I was involved in Word and service as an Associate in Ministry, serving as the minister of music for a very musically inclined congregation.

Music ministers are very busy people all year *'round* in the church, but there's something about Lent and *Easter* that causes the *rest* of the year to fade in comparison. There is *much* to *think* about and *plan* for Lent and Holy week as we go into Easter Sunday.

The *mood* has to be just right. The instrumentation needs to *match* the *mood*, there are choirs (vocal and bell) that need to rehearse, chairs need to be set for the instrumentalists, which sometimes means an adjustment of chairs in the choir loft.

And rehearsals...I mentioned rehearsals, right? This is all on *top* of the *regular* duties of a church musician (or at least in my case), which are choosing liturgies and hymns and making charts of rehearsal times.

By the time Easter morning arrived, the noise in my head would be at a fevered pitch. It started at 7 a.m. and my brain would be two steps ahead of *everything* that *happened* that day, until the *final* baton (or in my case, a number 2 pencil) cut off the last verse of "Thine is the Glory!"

It was ALWAYS a glorious day, and if it was an exceptional service of music, there would be *talk* of it for the next couple weeks. But the day AFTER Easter, for *me*, was a day of odd silence. After weeks of planning, leading, directing, and perfecting, I was finally able to simply stop and take it all in.

But I was *also* able to take time to notice things that had been ignored in all the busy-ness of preparing for Easter, finding that I had been so wrapped up in making sure we welcomed the risen Christ with the proper celebration, I had not taken time to notice that the *earth* was coming to life as *well*.

Isn't it strangely odd that a person serving a church, bringing the Word of God in song, didn't take time to recognize that God is *always* doing a new thing?

In today's Gospel lesson, we find ourselves looking in on two of the people who had been told that very day, that the *tomb* was *empty*. They were on the road to Emmaus, about a seven mile stretch from Jerusalem, walking side by side, and without masks, because there was no fear of the corona virus at that time.

They were talking to one another about the events of the past weekend. It is likely that *everyone* was at the crucifixion, because Jesus was a man that *most* people had put their trust in. They had heard his stories, they had *learned* from him, and they ***thought*** he would be the king...you know...like a *political* leader kind of king.

But on that fateful day that would never be forgotten, people *crowded* around Jesus as he was hung on a cross between two thieves, shouting out "crucify him," and as people got wrapped up in their anger and hostility, others joined in until ***finally***, the noise was at a *frenzied* pitch. *Jesus* cried out, the *earth* shook, there was *silence*, he was placed in a tomb and the stone was rolled in front to seal the deal.

*Silence.*

And then an empty tomb. And now a chance to look back at what had happened, and wondering if they would *ever* see *Jesus* again.

Cleopas and his friend were deep in conversation about the weekend, and the strangeness of the empty tomb, worried about what might happen next.

Well, *Jesus* was out for a morning stroll, as well. Most *likely*, he was enjoying the quietness and the beauty of the day, when he comes across these two, and decides to *join* them in their journey. They, of course, do not *recognize* him, because they're only seeing the *now* and they're worried about the *not yet*.

So, Jesus asks what they were talking about so intensely. This causes the two of them to stop, and Cleopas, in what I imagine to be a voice of amazement and probably a little sarcasm, says, “*Really? Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who doesn’t know what has been going on these past few days? I mean, where have you been that you wouldn’t know what was happening?*”

And Jesus, maybe playing along, says, “*What things?*” To which they reply, “The things about *Jesus of Nazareth*, who was a *prophet*, *mighty* in deed and word before *God* and **ALL** people, and how our *chief priests* and *elders* handed him over to be condemned to *death* and they *crucified* him.

We had *hoped* he would be the one to redeem Israel. And on *top* of *everything else*, this is the third day since everything happened, and we were told by women who had visited the tomb this morning that the tomb was *empty* and some angels had told them that *Jesus was alive*. We got pretty excited, and some of the men ran to the tomb, but *they* didn’t see Jesus, either.” (And obviously, Cleopas and his walking companion are not seeing Jesus, *EITHER*.)

So Jesus, rather than pointing out who he is, admonishes them just a bit, and begins to share with them about Moses and all the prophets, and interprets to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

I believe at this point, they start to change in their *feelings* about this man. Cleopas and his travelling companion have *heard* what Jesus is saying to them, even though they **STILL** don’t recognize him, but they *must* feel a closeness, because they *invite* Jesus to *stay* with them. Jesus was going to go on ahead, but they were pretty convincing in their invitation, telling him that it is almost evening and the day is nearly over, and Jesus stayed.

Cleopas and his traveling companion had reached their destination for the night and seemed to be able to relax and let their guard down, as it were, to share a *meal* with this newfound friend.

As they were at the table, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it and *gave* it to them. It was *then* that their eyes were opened and they were able to *recognize* Jesus, *just* in time for him to *disappear* before their very eyes.

Then I can imagine them saying to each other, “I KNEW there was something about that man! My heart felt strangely warmed when he was sharing the scriptures with us, didn’t yours? He really DID seem like someone we had known and loved for all this time.”

They just couldn’t put their *finger* on what it was, until Jesus sat at the table with them, and did this plain, *ordinary* act of breaking bread that turned their meal into an *extraordinary* moment of recognizing that this man was Jesus.

The *weekend...the three* days had been *stressful, raucous, hateful, grievous* and *filled* with the sounds of *shouting*. Caught up in those moments of grief and sadness, it was hard to think about *anything* else. It was *hard* to remember what had been written in the scriptures and *told* by the prophets, but in *this time* of walking on a *silent* road with the *risen* One, the two travelers found the *extraordinary* in the ordinary.

In *this* time of sheltering in place, our minds are filled with those who are ill and those who are dying of this *dreadful* virus. We are beginning to *miss* the things we love like travel, dining out, sharing meals in our homes, and *most* importantly, *hugging* one another, and *showing* each other *support* through up close and personal contact in community with one another, but *don’t* let that keep you from seeing the *bigger* picture.

Don’t let that keep you from seeing the *extraordinary* in the ordinary. Let those scriptures be opened to *you* again. Make this a time to pick up your *Bible* and do a *little reading*. In this time of staying in place and having a little quiet time, see what it *is* that God in Christ *is saying* to us.

Perhaps this is the time for a little Jesus intervention. *Ponder* the things we take for granted. Give *thanks* for the relationships that have been tended and nurtured, and *know* that God in Christ makes all things *new*, as he walks with us on our journey.

Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

Pastor Paula