



St. Andrew's United Church of Christ

7610 Ann Arbor Street, Dexter, MI 48130

Email: CAdams@StAndrewsDexter.org

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 26, 2020

10:00 A.M.



Dear Friends in Christ,

Easter is not just a day, but a new reality in which we live. The Lectionary gives us 7 Sundays to celebrate Easter, so during these weeks I have been, and will continue to be, following these Post-Easter Scripture Texts. On this Third Sunday of Easter, we join Cleopas and his companion on the dusty road to a small village outside of Jerusalem called Emmaus. It is a journey not only to a small town, but a journey into the very presence of God. As we worship, let us open our hearts and minds to the risen Christ and those fellow pilgrims who join us along the way.

I miss seeing and being with you on Sunday mornings and look forward to the time we will be able to gather again. While nothing substitutes for corporate worship, it's my hope that in this modest approach, worship of God still occurs!

Peace,
Pastor Bigelow

Silent Prayer for the Beginning of Worship — Eternal God, you draw near to us in Christ and make yourself our guest. Amid the cares and concerns of our daily lives in this uncertain world, make us attentive to your voice and alert to your presence. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WE GATHER TO WORSHIP THE TRIUNE GOD

CALL TO WORSHIP

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He has given us new life and hope. He has raised Jesus from the dead.

God has claimed us as his own.

He has brought us out of darkness. He has made us the light of the world.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Let us worship the risen Christ!

SALUTATION

“Grace to you and peace from the One who is and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.” Alleluia,
Amen! (Revelation 1:4-5)

GATHERING HYMN — [Worship Christ, the Risen King](#) (hyperlink to YouTube)

OPENING PRAYER

Living God, on the first Easter Day, you stood in the midst of your disciples and spoke to them your Peace. Come to us we pray, in this hour of worship, and in your risen power make us glad about your presence and breathe your Holy Spirit into our hearts that we might be strong to serve you and spread your good news to our families, friends and neighbors. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

WE ARE RENEWED BY THE SPIRIT

CALL TO CONFESSION

When we gather to praise God, we remember that we are a people who have preferred our will to God's will, our way to God's way. Accepting his power to become new persons in Christ, let us confess our sin to God and one another. Let us pray together.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of presence, we confess that we have not believed with our whole heart and mind that the risen Christ is indeed with us; otherwise we would walk more serenely and confidently through these strange and perplexing days. We confess that we have missed seeing your presence because we have failed to look and listen for the Spirit of Jesus to meet us in the scriptures, in the love of family, a caring friend or the help of a stranger.

(silent reflection)

Lord, help us to be more attentive in our daily walk with you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE AND FORGIVENESS

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

(John 3:16-17)

Believe this Gospel and go forth and live in peace. Amen.

GOD'S DIRECTION FOR OUR LIVES

We respond to God's forgiveness by living our thanks according to God's Word. Hear now God's will for our lives as found in Romans 9:12-21. Please find this text in your Bible and read.

WE HEAR AND LISTEN TO GOD'S WORD

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Old Testament—Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19

New Testament — Luke 24:13-35

SERMON – *Walking the Emmaus Road* (at end of bulletin)

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Christ has died,

Christ is risen,

Christ will come again.

HYMN OF RESPONSE

[*Precious Lord, Take My Hand*](#) (hyperlink to YouTube)

WE GO FORTH TO REVEAL JESUS CHRIST IN THE WORLD

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

Gracious God, we give you thanks for the gift of life in spite of the inconsistencies that life presents to us. We thank you for sufficient grace for every moment; and give thanks, that nothing in life nor death, on this day can separate us from you and your love in Jesus Christ.

We pray, Lord, for eyes wide open to see Jesus, crucified, risen and ascended, and to hear him calling us to serve him with compassion and mercy. Walk with those who are in the valley of the shadow of death. People dying in hospitals, separated from families and loved ones; with doctors and nurses, who are tired and overwhelmed with suffering and lack of resources, to care for those in need; those who have lost their businesses and those who have lost their jobs; those who work in grocery stores, police, fire fighters and EMTs who are vulnerable when going to work. Give patience to those who are tired of feeling stuck in their homes, to parents who are juggling new roles as parent/teacher, with the need to work from home. AND patience to receive what we need, not what we want.

Help us to endure the changes and uncertainties of routines and plans and strengthen us to make the necessary transitional adjustments to a strange and different way of life. We pray this in Jesus' name, who taught us to pray:

***Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory forever. Amen.***

PARTING HYMN [What a Friend We Have in Jesus](#) (hyperlink to YouTube)

BENEDICTION

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, on this day, now and forever. Amen.

SERMON – *Walking the Emmaus Road*

Scripture: Old Testament Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19

New Testament Luke 24:13-35

Text 24:30,31

“When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight.”

Emmaus is not far from Jerusalem, only seven miles. There is nothing unusual about this road. It's a highly traveled road and strangers often met on the road, walked with each other and talked while they traveled. It's longer than seven miles though if you are traveling with a heavy heart.

So, here we find two disciples walking this road to Emmaus. They were not the closest of disciples. If they were Peter, James or John, they might have recognized Jesus. But Jesus appears to these two disciples, one is named Cleopas and the other remains unidentified. Perhaps it was the wife of Cleopas.

These disciples are on a journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Journey is a common metaphor living today. I have a colleague who signs her letters and notes, “On the journey.” So, we can begin to understand that this passage is more than just two people joined by a stranger on a dusty dirt road. It is much bigger and more than that!

As they were walking on the road, the conversation drifted back to the events of the past weekend. From the events of the hosannas to the crucifixion, it was difficult for them to make sense of what had happened. They are joined by a stranger and to those of us reading the passage, know that the stranger is the risen Christ. But these disciples do NOT recognize him. Verse 16 suggests that their eyes “were kept from recognizing him.” One would think that they might have recognized his voice or mannerisms, but they don't recognize him. Maybe it was their grief that kept them from seeing Jesus. Jesus asks them what they are talking about and the disciples responded by saying, “are you the only stranger who does not know about the things that have taken place these days”? As the conversation continues and they reach Emmaus, the stranger is about to leave them, but they ask him to stay because it's getting late.

My sense is that as they entered the house, that they were hungry from the day's journey and opened the cupboard and pulled out a bottle of wine, a loaf of bread, some nuts and cheese and invited the stranger to have dinner with them. It was then, when they were at the table with him, when he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them, that they recognized him. Their eyes were opened, but then he vanished from their sight.

Now for the the early church, there is little question that this reference is meant to point to the experience of the living Christ in the Sacrament of Communion. As the church gathers and hears these ancient words repeated again, “take, eat, this is my body broken for you; take, drink, this

is my blood..." they are reminded of the death of Jesus and at the same time, the hope of the great feast yet to come, our eyes are opened to the stranger for who he really is.

There is too much to unpack from this passage in one sermon. So, let me lift up these thoughts for you to ponder.

If the risen Christ is walking and talking with two of his disciples and is unrecognizable, how are you and I, modern day disciples, walking the Emmaus Road, ever going to recognize Jesus? If the risen Christ is a stranger to these disciples who spent as much as two years in his company, how much more of a stranger will the Risen Christ seem to us, this much farther in history? Maybe those disciples' eyes were closed because they had a preconceived notion of how it would be when they really encountered God. That can be true for us, too. God will not fit into our notions of God. We want to domesticate God, fit him into our patterns of the patron saint of this philosophy or political party. That doesn't happen because God is like the risen Christ on the Emmaus road, God comes to us as a stranger.

The second lesson that we learn is that just as Jesus joined the disciples quietly and unnoticed, so he comes to us. He is gentler than one might expect from a tortured victim who has just risen from the dead. He does call them fools and slow of heart to believe but doesn't hit them over the head with a two by four to bring them to their knees. Instead, he opens scripture to them and later they realize that their hearts burned as he interpreted the scripture for them. He snuck up on them! Many people of faith will say that this is how Jesus just quietly worked in their lives, nothing dramatic, but just snuck up on them, and realized that he was always closer than they realized. When prayer goes unanswered, or there is serious disease, or life is falling apart, Jesus just might be closer than you think.

Finally, this account ends abruptly. Just when these two disciples recognized him, he vanished out of their sight, which is to say that we can never really nail God down. Just when you think you might have God figured out, and boxed into a nice neat understanding, God is off to something else. Just when we think we have the answers, he gives us a new problem to deal with, for which there are no answers. As someone recently said, there is no manual for a pandemic. We will never get God in a Meijer shopping bag like a purchase at the grocery store. God is always surprising and new, and sometimes like a stranger, like on that day on the road to Emmaus.

LET US PRAY

Lord Jesus, we thank you that you share the same road and walk along beside us. Continue to walk with us as a guide and friend; be with us always, even as you promised in scripture, until the end of the world. In your name, we pray. Amen.

Jesus Christ is risen!