

Third Sunday of Easter: April 23, 2023

Introduction to the day and the season of Easter:

The preacher and writer Diana Butler Bass offers two guiding questions for us to live in this season: First, Where will we experience resurrection now? Second, how do we practice resurrection? As we worship, share the meal, hear scripture and then go about our weeks, let's hold on to these questions; and talk about what we're experiencing.

Luke 24:13-35

13Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, 16but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. 17And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. 18Then 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?" 19He 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, 20and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 21But 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. 22Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 23and 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. 24Some 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." 25Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! 26Was it not necessary that the Messiah should

suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” 27Then 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.

SERMON

Finding common threads in two of the readings is pretty easy when you consider that Luke’s Gospel is the prequel to the book of Acts. Encountering the resurrected Christ changes everything. Two people tired from a seven mile walk see Jesus in the breaking of bread and they dash right back out—at night—for another seven mile trek. Crowds hear Peter’s sermon about resurrection and they want to know how they might redirect their lives in light of this amazing news.

These events taken together speak of an entirely new future—a new way of looking at life and even a new way of living it. Jesus didn’t defeat Rome in a day. Then again, Rome didn’t kill Jesus or God’s ancient promises to mend all things either. So what else might be possible?

Professor Matt Skinner frames the crowd's question 'what shall we do' as, "Since Christ is raised, what if we follow our faith in resurrection to its fitting conclusion?"

Peter's sermon includes the word, 'repentance'. As the preacher and writer Frederick Buechner liked to say, repentance is a moment of grace less about saying sorry and more about saying wow to new possibilities. Sometimes the direction of our lives changes. Sometimes the repentance is abrupt- Someone who recently shared their story of quitting a motorcycle gang and seeking out a community of Christians. That part was abrupt. Yet the road ahead is quite a bit longer. His first visit to a church prompted him to say, "I have nothing in common with these people" A friend said to him, "But eventually you will."

Sometimes repentance acts more like the aging of wine where our views change over time. Deanna Earnest, director of "Beyond the Streets" shared with some of us several stories of shifting attitudes and perspectives happened for clients and volunteers alike. For at least one volunteer a changed heart led to a change in careers. Dignity and trusting relationships made such change—even the littlest change— possible. I like to believe these stories illustrate resurrection happening in our lives today.

We as church might practice resurrection by being open to having our minds and hearts changed—The walkers to Emmaus lived with dashed hopes because the restoration of Israel didn't happen as they expected it to happen. Many churches long to return to our heyday now that the pandemic has eased up. Maybe God is up to something else. In that something else, maybe we'll have life altering moments where we recognize Jesus when he shows up among us. Amen.