

St. Luke's Episcopal Church
Lindale, Texas
Easter 3
Luke 24:13-35 *The Road to Emmaus*
April 30, 2017
The Reverend John P. Carr

Open Our Eyes

Maybe it's just me, but I find this story about the encounter between Jesus and his followers on the way to Emmaus remarkable and new. We only hear this story in our lectionary once every three years but it reveals to us who we are.

On Sunday morning Jesus was not in the tomb. The women have seen some remarkable things there at the tomb and rushed back to tell the disciples, who discount their report. At least Peter and John go and check their story. They confirm what Mary and the others have said but still remain holed up in hiding from the Jews.

Then that afternoon, as two of the followers of Jesus are getting out of town on the road to Emmaus, they are joined by a fellow traveler. He casually joins their conversation asking what they are talking about. Rocked by his question, they stop dead in their tracks, shocked by the question. *Don't you know!?* They may as well as asked him what rock he had been hiding under. If only they knew...

No, what, he asks? They tell him the events of the past few days about the trial and crucifixion of a man named Jesus. They express their sorrow at his loss because they thought that he was the Messiah come to redeem Israel. Some of their friends had said that they had experienced a vision of angels that morning who said that Jesus had risen and that he would see them again. But Jesus was missing! He was not in the tomb!

They didn't know what to make of the events of the last few hours but they were *getting out of town*. They feared that the Jewish authorities would come for them too.

The two fellow travelers with Jesus were in fact converts of his. They were lost in their understanding of *who* Jesus is and *how* he was to live out his mission on earth. It seems that not only were they *blind to the presence* of Jesus but they were *blind to the message* of the Messiah in the Law and the Prophets.

Jesus started with the scriptures to open their minds and hearts once again to the message of the Messiah beginning with Moses. As at other times, Jesus is amazed at the lack of understanding of his followers. As they walk along they seem unable to recognize Jesus. Perhaps his face was hidden by his garment or maybe they were not able to recognize him in his post resurrection appearance. The last time they had seen him his face was bloody, scarred by blows and scraped by the thorns and falls. Now they see a man who is unblemished.

They arrive at their destination and invite Jesus to stay with them. As they walked along, Jesus had opened their eyes to see the message of the Messiah in the scriptures, and now he opened their eyes to recognize him at the meal.

In that great moment in Emmaus, Jesus revealed himself to them in the breaking of bread. Their eyes were opened to who he is and they are amazed. Then he vanishes from their sight. He was revealed to them in the breaking of the bread. He opened their eyes, and this was incredibly good news to them.

They had thought that the Jesus movement, the Way, was over with his death and now the loss of his body. They thought that Jesus was just another prophet, a lost cause, and because they believed in him they were

lost too. Even worse, Jesus had been killed by the Jews and now they might be killed too.

Now in an instant, they realize that Jesus is not lost. Following the opening of their eyes on the road to the scriptures by Jesus, and in the breaking of the bread, they suddenly see him for who he is and realize that Jesus is not lost! He kept his promise and they are not lost either!
Jesus is alive!! Jesus is resurrected!!

Jesus has won over death and what he promised has come true.
If the resurrection is true for Jesus then it is true for everyone for all time.

They grab some bread and head back to Jerusalem in the dark as fast as they can. They can't wait to tell the disciples what they have seen.

In the breaking of the bread he was revealed and they knew that they were part of his kingdom.

Breaking bread is something that is done in communion with others that links us to fellow believers and to God. A week after the Maundy Thursday service that recalls the command of Jesus to love one another, Ledell Lee had his last meal.¹ Ledell had done a very bad thing and the state of Arkansas was about to mete out the ultimate punishment for his misdeed 24 years earlier.

A death row inmate is usually granted the last wish for the meal of his choice. These meals are met, as well as the prison kitchen can accommodate, but Ledell had an unusual request for his last meal.

He requested Holy Communion.

He, like the rest of us, was looking for comfort and healing in the grace of Jesus as expressed and experienced in the sharing of the bread and wine of Holy Communion. He wasn't grand standing. He quietly wanted this Communion to be his last meal.

Before Communion, we all kneel and ask for forgiveness of our sins. Those around us silently confess their faults and ask for forgiveness based on repentance. Then the communicants advance confidently to the altar rail to share in the bread and the wine, the body and blood of Jesus that he gave us in the sacrament of Holy Communion.

At the altar rail we are all forgiven sinners, we once again hear the host, the bread, the body of Christ being broken for us, we hear the words that we are to receive the gifts of God to be taken in remembrance that Christ died for us, and to remember him in the breaking of the bread.

Jesus had to re-teach the scriptures to his followers on the road to Emmaus. When he revealed himself to them in the breaking of the bread, they had a sudden insight. He had opened first their minds and then their eyes to see.

They had to reconsider who they are as members of the Way of Jesus. Things have changed. Jesus is resurrected. They probably jumped for joy as this sudden revelation and ran back to their friends in Jerusalem to share the Good News with them.

In communion, we too are all united with those who are slow to understand, all those who have sinned and been forgiven, those with a sudden insight, all those who have opened their eyes to the reality of the presence of Jesus, and all those for whom Jesus died. We are all **one** when the communion bread is shared. This is when our eyes are opened to the reality of the presence and grace of God.

Ledell didn't intend to send a message but he did.

A message that we all fall short but are saved by the grace of God through faith. A grace that opens our eyes to the knowledge and love of God and his Jesus the Christ that is shown in the breaking of the bread.

Amen

1. Lessons from a condemned man's last meal. Jake Ownesby

