

The Third Sunday of Easter
April 30, 2017, Year A
St. Dunstan's Anglican Church, Largo, FL

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

Psalm 116:1-3, 10-17

1 Peter 1:17-23

Luke 24:13-35

Alleluia! Christ is risen! *The Lord is risen indeed!* **Alleluia!**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In our gospel reading this morning, we heard the account of two men walking together on the road to Emmaus, a town perhaps 7-8 miles from Jerusalem, although no one today is certain of its location. The town itself is of no particular significance other than that it was a destination for these two travelers.

The timing of their journey, however, is much more important. This was the afternoon of the day Jesus rose from the dead. These two men were disciples of Jesus, not among the twelve, but among those who followed Jesus, heard his teaching, saw the miracles and were convinced that Jesus was the Messiah whom God had sent to redeem Israel and restore her to the greatness she once enjoyed as God's own people.

They were very disappointed when their Messiah was crucified by the Romans rather than taking the nation of Israel away from them and ascending the throne as their king in the line from David. Like most Jews of their day who knew Scripture, they were expecting a warrior who would restore Israel to the greatness it once enjoyed.

Jesus walked with them, but they did not recognize him. He opened up Scripture for them, teaching them things they already knew about God and the coming Messiah, but from a different perspective. Like Jews of today, they had a different understanding of what God would do for his people. They had a long and rich history of living as the people chosen by God to be his people, yet when the Messiah came among them, they could not see him for what he was.

With 20/20 hindsight, it seems so clear to us now that Jesus came as a spiritual messiah, not as a political leader. But they did not see that – at first. They were so impressed with his teaching that they invited him to stay with them and have supper. When he broke the bread, they recognized him for who he was and is.

Can you imagine how they must have felt to be sitting at table with a stranger and learn that he is the Master they had followed and believed in? He had taught them so much about God the Father and the kingdom of God and how to live as faithful followers and stewards of the awesome knowledge they had received. And now he is clearly alive again, just as he said. He must be the Messiah after all!!

How could they contain themselves? Well, they didn't. Scripture says they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem." They probably ran. And when did they get there? In the evening of the very day Jesus rose from the dead, perhaps as Jesus was about to visit the eleven or just after.

This is an amazing story. But we have an amazing story too – a story to tell others about because these same things have happened to us. How often has Jesus walked with us? How often have we faced difficulties and prayed that God would see us through it all, only to come out the other end of such a trial and realize that he actually did.

We may have to look a little harder, but if we are honest in our thoughts and watch and listen for what Jesus is doing in our lives, we will recognize him for who he is and break out into praise and thanksgiving. Don't doubt. Have eyes of faith. When God puts a challenge in front of you, just say thank you and get going. Don't analyze the situation and worry whether you heard God properly or not.

In our pursuit of spiritual growth this year, one of the things we have been considering is the source of our faith. At first, the answer seems obvious: our faith comes from God. We believe in God. We trust God. We know God loves us. But listen to those statements we all use and hear so often. They all start with "we." We believe We trust We know

These statements are not wrong, but it is very easy to get things turned around if we aren't careful. Because when we think things happen because we believe, trust, know, or whatever, we have things upside down. This is a faith in the physical realm, the physical realm meaning things that we can understand through knowledge, logic and reason. They are human driven.

What if we consider interactions with God from his point of view, like a two-year old on an adventure with his dad? If dad says it's good, we do it. If dad decides we ought to go here or there, we go. If dad decides to do this or that, we do it. Now we are believing, trusting and knowing because we have absolute faith that our heavenly Father, Dad, has our best interests at heart, so we just forge ahead with all the energy and abandon a two-year old can muster.

Peter was just another guy like us. He had faith, and he had shortcomings. But when he was moving in step with God, he just acted. He stepped out of the boat because Jesus called him to step out of the boat, not because it was his idea, but because it was clearly God's idea. That's spiritual faith, a greater faith than physical faith, which is really just human understanding trying its best to obey God and do the right things.

We have "on the road to Emmaus" moments just like the travelers in the gospel reading. We can and do experience the risen Jesus in worship, prayer, communion, Bible study, and godly fellowship. We serve him in mission, outreach and other acts of service such as altar and flower guild, office volunteer support, website and newsletter, in the kitchen, nursery and Sunday School classrooms, and so many other ways in and out of the church.

The key is to recognize those moments for what they are. Catch them, savor them, remember them and share them with others. People won't think you're crazy if you talk about walking with God, at least not here in the parish family, and if others who don't have room for church in their lives start to fuss, just recognize the moment as an opportunity to talk about the things God has done in your life.

The road to Emmaus is an exciting journey, one we can all enjoy beyond all belief, because it is a journey with Jesus himself.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! *The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

And now unto you, O Lord, be ascribed all might, majesty, power and dominion. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.