

**Weekend of Sunday, April 14, 2021**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter/Lectionary X/Proper X/Year B**  
**First Reading: Acts 3:12-19**  
**Second Reading: 1 John 3:1-7**  
**Gospel Reading: Luke 24:36b-48**  
**Sermon Title: “The New Normal”**

**Theme**

*The gospel for the third Sunday of Easter is always one in which the risen Christ shares food with the disciples, meals that are the Easter template for the meal we share each Sunday. In today’s gospel, Jesus both shares the disciples’ food and shows them the meaning of his suffering, death, and resurrection through the scriptures, the two main elements of our Sunday worship.*

**Text**

<sup>36b</sup>Jesus himself stood among [the disciples] and said to them, “Peace be with you.”  
<sup>37</sup>They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. <sup>38</sup>He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?  
<sup>39</sup>Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” <sup>40</sup>And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. <sup>41</sup>While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?”  
<sup>42</sup>They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup>and he took it and ate in their presence.  
<sup>44</sup>Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” <sup>45</sup>Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, <sup>46</sup>and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup>and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>You are witnesses of these things.”

## Sermon

If this Gospel Reading sounds familiar that's because the reading for today is Luke's version of Jesus' first appearance to the disciples, and last week you had John's version of the same event. But that is okay because if Christians were to be described, we could be described as *resurrection people*. Without the resurrection, we would be hopeless. But because of the resurrection, we can be hopeful about all things, at all times.

Although there are some similarities between the two readings there are also some differences. In Luke's version, the resurrection happened; Mary and the other women arrived at the tomb and were confronted by two angels who tell them that Jesus has risen from the dead. Mary didn't have an encounter with Jesus, but instead, she and the others returned to the eleven disciples and reported what they have been told.

Then Luke takes us to a desolate road between Jerusalem and Emmaus where the first witnesses to the risen Lord were two disciples who were second-tier disciples at best. Along that trip, Jesus explained the purpose and meaning of the passion and resurrection, but it was not until Jesus broke bread with the two that their eyes were opened to who he really is – and then he disappeared and the two return to Jerusalem to report that they have seen the Lord! This happened on Resurrection Sunday evening. And then, according to Luke, our Gospel Reading for today happened right after that – still Resurrection Sunday evening.

The disciples were huddled behind closed and locked doors of a house in Jerusalem for fear of the Jews. The report had just been given and they were still trying to sort it all out when Jesus just appeared among them and said, "Peace be with you." Luke wrote,

<sup>37</sup>*They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost.*

What do you think? Then Jesus went through this resurrection verification process of showing them his hands and feet and inviting them to touch him so that they will be assured that he is the real deal. And if that wasn't enough, he asked them for some food. Personally, I think he did that as another method of resurrection verification just so they could see that he was really alive and not simply a ghost.

Finally then, in verses 44 and following, it would appear that at least Jesus was ready to move on in the conversation from resurrection verification and began to explain to the eleven the purpose and meaning of the events of the last few days. And we are happy that he did and that Luke wrote it down for us because we like the disciples, would have a hard time getting our minds around all that has taken place. Imagine once again, Jesus went from beloved preacher and teacher, and performer of signs and miracles who was cheered into the city by adoring fans to a despised and rejected leader of a cult nailed to a cross until dead in less than a week. And now he is alive and present before them. This would take some time to understand.

Now sadly, we don't know the details of what Jesus said, wouldn't that be nice, but boiled down we know that he claimed to be the one written about in sacred scripture and he further explained that all he had gone through was required to fulfill scripture. Specifically, he said:

<sup>46</sup>that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup>and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

And then he said some very powerful words to them,

<sup>48</sup>You are witnesses of these things.

I'm tempted to say that those last very powerful words apply to us. But the truth of the matter is that we weren't there; we can hardly be witnesses, right?

- Thirteen months ago, the world changed. We learned that the whole world would be involved in a global pandemic, and most of the world as far as was possible, shut down. And yet global chaos did not happen.
- Millions of lives were lost as medical science caught up to the virus, and we learned of heroism on the part of many in the medical and first responder field.
- Without work, many would have gone hungry and so food pantries and pop-up food giveaways became commonplace.

- A global effort was initiated to develop a vaccine and now we have several options and slowly people are getting vaccinated.
- And I am bold to say that just as important as all that, this church never missed leading its followers in worship and prayer for the world – indeed, it was all most of us could do.

I remember setting up my home office in my basement. As if March in Ohio isn't dark enough, I was in the basement. Things looked pretty bleak for the disciples too. I'm pretty sure they thought life was closing in on them too. And then the resurrected Jesus came into their presence and said, "Peace be with you."

That alone didn't get it done. I sense uneasiness in the room. And so Jesus did some pretty normal things. He said, "See the holes where the nails were. It really happened. But I'm back with you now." The eating thing I think was just another way to put their minds at ease. A way of saying life will establish a new normal.

You may not think this Gospel Reading has anything to do with us. But maybe it has everything to do with someone who needs us. I know we are not out of this pandemic yet. I know there are millions of people, loved ones of someone, who died. Maybe you know someone who lost a loved one, lost a job, lost a home. In whatever state we find ourselves, we should pause and thank God in Christ because he still brings peace amid chaos to those who call him Lord.

God is breaking through our present chaos with a new normal. In this past year, we have gotten an opportunity to focus on the basics of life, the *essential business* as it was called. That is why this church never missed leading its followers in worship and prayer for the world. It was, and remains our *essential business*.

### **Raisin' the Bar Challenge**

Let us continue to hope and pray that the light we see coming is the defeat of COVID-19 and life as we knew it 13 months ago can return. And let us reflect on the goodness of God and give our thanks and praise, yes, but also our witness, because as Jesus reminded his disciples, we are witnesses to the goodness of God. We too have experienced a resurrection of sorts. And so even amid the chaos of our days, we can be hopeful, because we are resurrection people.

Apart from COVID-19, there is undoubtedly a long list of episodes we could begin to list where the peace of the Lord broke into the chaos of our lives, and just when we thought all was lost, we received some peace that could have come from nowhere else but God in Christ and we made it through to see another day. Things may never have return to normal as we knew it, but we can find a new normal. And there we will find the peace the Jesus brings.

Jesus told his disciples, “You are witnesses of these things.” And when we take the time to care and share what the Lord has done in our lives, we become witnesses in a new generation. To a new generation who also needs peace.

### **Prayer**

Lord God, you have broken into our world of chaos with the good news of our Lord’s resurrection. If death cannot hold him down is there anything he can’t do? If you would have given him up for sinful thankless people like us then what wouldn’t you do for us now? Help us to ponder these questions as you send us out into the world to be your witnesses. Amen