

Jesus appearing on the road to Emmaus is one of our favorite Easter stories.
It's supposed to feel familiar and comforting but this year when
we're all at home...it feels different.

What's supposed to happen is that Cleopas and his buddy meet Jesus
and then run to tell the other disciples
how Jesus had appeared to them in the breaking of the bread.

And then every preacher worth a lick
preaches a beautiful sermon about communion
and then at the fraction everybody sings,
"Be known to us, Lord Jesus, in the breaking of the bread."

But here we are at home.

We can't be together in a room like they were.
We can't share in the bread and wine like they did.

And that doesn't hit everybody the same, but it is a loss.
And if you're feeling that loss this morning, if that's hard for you,
you should feel okay to name it.

The Lord Jesus will not be known to us this morning
in the breaking of bread.

Can you imagine ever hearing that in the middle of Easter?
The Lord Jesus will not be known to us this morning
in the breaking of bread.

But Jesus IS known to us, not just in our memory but in this gathering,
right here, right now.

The Lord Jesus IS known to us, and will continue to be with us
wherever and however we gather in his name.

+ + +

There are basically 5 resurrection appearances by Jesus in the gospels,
and every one of them is different.

Jesus calls Mary Magdalene by name. We heard that on Easter morning.

When the disciples are locked up in a room,
Jesus appears to them and breathes peace on them.

On the way to Emmaus he appears to Cleopas and the other disciple
after he interprets the scriptures and shares in the bread and wine.

He offers to let Thomas touch his wounds,
and later he asks Peter 3 times if he loves him.

Every encounter with the risen Christ is different,
but the common thread is that Jesus meets his followers IN their need,
and he gives them WHAT they need to keep going.

In 5 different ways Jesus appears to them when they are ready to give up
and they find in him the strength to carry on.

+ + +

We like to celebrate Mary Magdalene as the first one to encounter
the risen Jesus and the one who brings the good news to the disciples.
And we should.

But Mary is not better or worse than the other disciples.
She wasn't expecting him to really rise from the dead.

They ALL assumed that the crucifixion was the end.
She went there to care for his dead body and even when
she found the empty tomb she cried because she assumed
someone had stolen it.

She couldn't see the truth until in her moment of despair,
Jesus called her by name - "Mary!"
Then she was transformed. Then she became the Apostle to the Apostles.

The disciples were so afraid they locked themselves in a room
until Jesus appeared to them. At first they thought he was a ghost.

None of them were ready to become the founders of the Church
until Jesus appeared and breathed peace on them.

Cleopas and the other disciple were running away from Jerusalem
when Jesus appeared to them. He heard the despair in their voice -
"But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel,"
they told him.

When Jesus taught them the scriptures and shared bread and wine,
then they saw him and went back to the other disciples,
back to the danger,
back to the holy city with the greatest news of all.

Thomas dropped to his knees when he saw Jesus with his wounds,
and said, "My Lord and my God."

And Simon Peter...blessed Simon bar Jonah.

He carried the weight of his denial so heavily that it wasn't until
Jesus' second appearance to him that he could let it go.
But when he did - "Yes, Lord. You know that I love you" -
then he could finally be who Jesus proclaimed him to be -
the Rock on whom Christ's church would be built.

+ + +

A lot about our world has changed.

Most of us at Holy Trinity are doing okay right now,
but we're all feeling the difference.

We have to guard against seeing this as a time to hide or run away,
because this is the time for us to remember that we already know
the risen Christ, and to trust that he will continue to be present to us,
and like the disciples, go back to our ministries with
even greater commitment.

Your parish is doing pretty well right now.

Your buildings are being cared for, your giving is strong so far,
and your clergy, vestry, and staff are doing good work.

But we have more to do. We are not just called to maintain.

All this live-streaming has convinced me that it's time to invest
so that we can always broadcast our services.

Imagine being out of town, or sick, or not able to come to church,
and still being able to pray and connect and worship
with your sisters and brothers at Holy Trinity.

Next week we're sending out a plan for storing up casseroles at the church,
and y'all need to be diligent in reading scripture and praying
and checking in on one another.

+ + +

One of the effects of sheltering in place is that hunger is becoming
even more of a problem across the world.

In Decatur and Atlanta, homeless populations are getting the worst of it.

Y'all are being so faithful in our local feeding ministry,
working with other groups to give lunches away at the library.

And Alex Hall sent me an update on what Holy Trinity folks are doing
at Church of the Common Ground.

He said about 40 of y'all are making lunches and now masks.

Be very clear about what that is.

Y'all are making an Easter Acclamation
to the people who need to hear it the most.

+ + +

And now the biggest challenge yet.

For years y'all have supported the people of Haiti through Ed Buckley's
Water Life Hope and their partner organization, Food for the Poor.

Some of you know that the Episcopal Diocese of Haiti
is the largest diocese in the Episcopal Church.

Last week I sat in on a call with Bishop Oge of Haiti.

The virus is just starting to be detected but it has already created a crisis.

Hunger and straight-up starvation are increasing quickly
and Food for the Poor is launching a \$10 million dollar
feeding campaign on top of their ongoing programs.

Friends, normally we try to gather our collection at Holy Trinity
and celebrate by sending one big check.

But everything takes a little longer than normal right now
and time is not our friend in Haiti,

so I'm going to ask you to make a donation today, on your own,
an Easter Acclamation of hope in the midst of the
humanitarian crisis in Haiti.

I talked to Ed yesterday - he's a parishioner if you don't know him -
and he said if you send a donation to Water Life Hope
he will send 100% of it to Food for the Poor,
and because he's worked with them for over a decade
he can make sure all of the money goes directly to food
programs in Haiti.

You can go to WaterLifeHope.org and use a credit card
or you can mail a check straight to Ed's house at 327 Adams St. in Decatur.
Or call me and I'll give you the info offline.

+ + +

The world is upside down right now.
Staying away from people is an act of love,
and putting yourself in harm's way is an even greater act of love.

Nobody knows what's going to happen to the economy -
to our jobs, to our investments, to our retirement.

The world is upside down, but that's when Jesus shows up.
Christ is known to us right here, right now.

Sheltering in place doesn't have to mean hiding.
Being an essential worker doesn't have to mean being afraid.
And not knowing the future doesn't mean not knowing what is right today.

Make your Easter Acclamation. Live it. Christ IS risen. Amen.