

The Third Sunday of Easter, April 26, 2020, the Rev. David Ota
Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Psalm 116:1-3, 10-17; 1 Peter 1:17-23; Luke 24:13-35

The Resurrection faith is not built without disappointment, but begins with the cross and the empty tomb. In other words, for those of us who know disappointment in life, the Resurrection faith is for us. Because we hope for a transformed world which is resisted by the powerful, we will know defeat and disappointment, before hope can be reborn in us again.

After the crucifixion and burial of Jesus, on Easter morning when the women went to the tomb and encountered the Risen Lord, they then went and told the disciples. As news of the empty tomb and the testimony of the women spread among the larger group of followers of Jesus, two of the followers left Jerusalem despondent on their way home to Emmaus. They had great hopes for what Jesus would do in Jerusalem. He was a prophet mighty in deed and word. They had hoped that he would be the Messiah who would “redeem Israel” from the Roman oppression. You see, this was their plan for what Jesus would be and do. Jesus would be a political savior.

We may be like the two followers of Jesus; we may be like Cleopas and the unnamed follower. We may have our own hopes for ourselves, for our nation, for the leaders of our nation. Usually, our hopes involve some objective. We hope that our loved ones will find their way in life. We hope for our nation to be just and good. We hope for our leaders to be wise and compassionate to inspire us and the rest of the nation into loving service. However, we never hope to be faced with calamity such as the current pandemic, or with war. No matter what our hopes may be, in the course of life there will be challenges and disappointments. And when these challenges and disappointments come that is when we will need Resurrection faith.

On the long road to Emmaus, Cleopas and his companion were walking home to Emmaus defeated. Things just had not gone as they had hoped. It was only when a stranger came upon them, and walked with them, and explained to them what the scriptures had told them about how the Messiah had to suffer such things, before entering into God’s glory. Jesus’ mission was not merely to be a political savior, but to be the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world. Jesus would be the one who would overcome the power of death, and reveal the power of love in the world.

The stranger, of course was the Risen Lord, and Cleopas and his companion were captivated by how he reinterpreted the events that took place in Jerusalem. Yes, the powerful had their way with Jesus, and sought to kill the movement of God’s love revealed in Jesus. But instead of killing the movement, the powerful had revealed the power of God’s love in Jesus. Love is revealed in suffering. Love is willing to suffer for the sake of the beloved.

As they approached Emmaus, the stranger was going to leave them until he was invited to stay with them, “because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So, the stranger stayed as a guest. We sang as our opening hymn, “Abide with me, fast falls the eventide.” I chose this hymn because it reminds me of this story, how when our life darkens, we need to call on the Lord Jesus to abide with us. We invite him into the disappointments of our lives, and he would be our guest, and then becomes our host in the breaking of the bread.

It would be the stranger, the Risen Lord among us, who took the bread, blessed and broke it and gave it to them. In that moment, their eyes were opened and they recognized that it was the Lord and he vanished. In that moment, they realized that what had been revealed to them, that Jesus had a greater

purpose than overcoming Roman rule, but to overcome the powers of evil and death, so that people could live with hope and love.

The health care workers who must face the prospect of being infected with the Coronavirus and becoming ill with Covid-19 continue to care for the very sick. Some of them have died. However, they have decided to face the possibility of death to fulfill their roles in the hope of bringing health to their patients, and if not health, then compassionate care.

It has been said, when the challenges arise in our lives, we are to seize the moment. Governor Andrew Cuomo has often said this about how New Yorkers are responding to the challenges of their lives. The best of them, instead of running away from New York and spreading the virus, are doing their part either in the care of the sick, or in providing essential services, or by staying home, so as not to spread the virus. Instead of this being the great disappointment of their lives, it will be the opportunity for them to reveal the love within their hearts.

Cleopas and his companion ran back to Jerusalem to tell the good news they had received. Simon too had received the good news. Just as the Easter women first shared the good news with the disciples, and how they needed their own Resurrection experience to believe, and just as the ten disciples shared the good news with Thomas, but Thomas needed his own experience to believe, so too did Cleopas and his companion need their own Resurrection experience to believe. Perhaps we need our own as well.

Right now, we are not practicing the breaking of the bread, because of the need to maintain a safe physical distance so as not to spread the Coronavirus. We are separated physically but connected spiritually. We are to ask the Lord Jesus to stay close by us, so that we too may meet our moment in love.

So, no matter what disappointment you face, do not despair. Instead, invite the Lord Jesus to stay with you and be with you through all the dark thoughts you may endure. Let him help you see your disappointment, not as the end, but as an opportunity to put your trust in God instead of your own plans. Ask how God is inviting you to use this disappointment as an opportunity for loving service, and let the Lord Jesus be your host at the heavenly banquet of God's love. Amen.

I propose to show that all of us like the disciples on the road to Emmaus are faced with disappointments in life which lead to discouragement and defeat, until we recognize that the sufferings of life are necessary if we are to enter into God's glory. Our plans are not the same as God's plans. When our plans fail, then we are called to put our trust not in our plans, but in God who calls us back into loving community which is revealed to us in the breaking of the bread.

The Collect

O God, whose blessed Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread: Open the eyes of our faith, that we may behold him in all his redeeming work; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The First Lesson

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd, "Let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified."

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

The Response

Psalm 116:1-3, 10-17

Dilexi, quoniam

1 I love the LORD, because he has heard the voice of my supplication, *
because he has inclined his ear to me whenever I called upon him.

2 The cords of death entangled me;
the grip of the grave took hold of me; *
I came to grief and sorrow.

3 Then I called upon the Name of the LORD: *
"O LORD, I pray you, save my life."

10 How shall I repay the LORD *
for all the good things he has done for me?

11 I will lift up the cup of salvation *
and call upon the Name of the LORD.

12 I will fulfill my vows to the LORD *
in the presence of all his people.

13 Precious in the sight of the LORD *
is the death of his servants.

14 O LORD, I am your servant; *
I am your servant and the child of your handmaid;
you have freed me from my bonds.

15 I will offer you the sacrifice of thanksgiving *
and call upon the Name of the LORD.

16 I will fulfill my vows to the LORD *
in the presence of all his people,

17 In the courts of the LORD'S house, *
in the midst of you, O Jerusalem.
Hallelujah!

The Epistle

1 Peter 1:17-23

If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.

The Gospel

Luke 24:13-35

Now on that same day two of Jesus' disciples were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. Then 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?" He 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, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But 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. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and 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. Some 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." Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But 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. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They 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?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has

appeared to Simon!” Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

In preparation for this coming Sunday’s worship, please pray this coming Sunday’s Collect of the Day and read and reflect on the lessons assigned as printed below

The Fourth Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:42-47; Psalm 23; 1 Peter 2:19-25; John 10:1-10

The Collect

O God, whose Son Jesus is the good shepherd of your people: Grant that when we hear his voice we may know him who calls us each by name, and follow where he leads; who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

The First Lesson

Acts 2:42-47

Those who had been baptized devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

The Response

Psalm 23

Dominus regit me

1 The LORD is my shepherd; *

I shall not be in want.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures *

and leads me beside still waters.

3 He revives my soul *

and guides me along right pathways for his Name's sake.

4 Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I shall fear no evil; *

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

5 You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me; *

you have anointed my head with oil,

and my cup is running over.

6 Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, *
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

The Epistle

1 Peter 2:19-25

It is a credit to you if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps.

“He committed no sin,
and no deceit was found in his mouth.”

When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

The Gospel

John 10:1-10

Jesus said, “Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”