

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER
APRIL 23, 2023



**Luke 24:27 “Then he interpreted for them
the things written about himself
in all the scriptures,”**

ST. JOHN

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***RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

ONE: God has called us together for this time of worship.

God is listening to our thoughts and to our speaking.

ALL: God inclines an ear to us and hears us.

God knows us better than we know ourselves.

Let us open our hearts to the One who gives us life.

Let us set our faith and hope in God.

In one another’s presence, we renew our vows.

Together we offer our thanksgiving sacrifice.

God’s promises to us are ancient and ever new.

God is with us here and on all the roads we travel.

Together we lift our voices in songs of praise.

Together we recognize we are precious in God’s sight.

***INVOCATION:** Wondrous God, present with us when we do not know it, valuing us when we do not care for ourselves, planting in us the seed of your word even when the soil of our hearts is hard and unyielding, open our eyes to recognize you here. May we sense your presence next to us. May we hear your voice. May we know your touch. May we see you in one another and in the beauty all around us. May our reality emerge deep inside each life,

transforming our thoughts and deeds and our relationship with one another. Amen.

***CALL TO CONFESSION:** Peter preached: “Save yourselves from this crooked generation. Repent . . . so your sins may be forgiven.” We participate in our society’s alienation from God. We have joined the “me” generation in putting our own interests before all else. We have much to confess before we can claim to wholeness God offers.

***PRAYER OF CONFESSION: O God, we confess that we rush through our days without recognizing your presence with us. We follow our busy diversions without reference to your will for us. We strive for financial success and personal recognition, while you call for obedience to truth and genuine mutual love. Purify our souls, we pray, and redirect our priorities. May we be born anew through your living and enduring word. Amen. Silence**

***ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS:** The promise of forgiveness is for us and for our children, for everyone whom God calls. The gift of the Holy Spirit is ours to receive. Lift up the cup of salvation every day, and call on God’s name. Give thanks for the

words and deeds of Jesus, who revealed God’s love for us and enlists us as disciples and apostles.

***GLORIA:**

Glory to the Creator, and the Christ and the Spirit so near. As it was from the start so it shall be forever, One God always here. (repeat two more times.) (end) One God always here. One God always here.

SECOND TESTAMENT READING: Acts 2:14a, 36-41

¹⁴ Peter stood with the other eleven apostles. He raised his voice and declared, “Judeans and everyone living in Jerusalem! Know this! Listen carefully to my words!

³⁶ “Therefore, let all Israel know beyond question that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” ³⁷ When the crowd heard this, they were deeply troubled. They said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”

³⁸ Peter replied, “Change your hearts and lives. Each of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ This promise is for you, your children, and for all who are far away—as many as the Lord our God invites.” ⁴⁰ With many other words he testified to them and encouraged them,

saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.”⁴¹ Those who accepted Peter’s message were baptized. God brought about three thousand people into the community on that day.

EPISTLE READING: 1 Peter 1:17-23

¹⁷ Since you call upon a Father who judges all people according to their actions without favoritism, you should conduct yourselves with reverence during the time of your dwelling in a strange land. ¹⁸ Live in this way, knowing that you were not liberated by perishable things like silver or gold from the empty lifestyle you inherited from your ancestors. ¹⁹ Instead, you were liberated by the precious blood of Christ, like that of a flawless, spotless lamb. ²⁰ Christ was chosen before the creation of the world, but was only revealed at the end of time. This was done for you, ²¹ who through Christ are faithful to the God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory. So now, your faith and hope should rest in God.

²² As you set yourselves apart by your obedience to the truth so that you might have genuine affection for your fellow believers, love each other deeply and earnestly. ²³ Do this because you have been given new birth—not from the type of seed that decays but

from seed that doesn’t. This seed is God’s life-giving and enduring word.

***GOSPEL READING: Luke 24:13-35**

Encounter on the Emmaus road

¹³ On that same day, two disciples were traveling to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking to each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were discussing these things, Jesus himself arrived and joined them on their journey. ¹⁶ They were prevented from recognizing him.

¹⁷ He said to them, “What are you talking about as you walk along?” They stopped, their faces downcast.

¹⁸ The one named Cleopas replied, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who is unaware of the things that have taken place there over the last few days?”

¹⁹ He said to them, “What things?”

They said to him, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth. Because of his powerful deeds and words, he was recognized by God and all the people as a prophet. ²⁰ But our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him. ²¹ We had hoped he was the one who would redeem Israel. All these things happened three days ago. ²² But there’s more: Some women from our group have left us stunned. They went to the tomb

early this morning ²³ and didn't find his body. They came to us saying that they had even seen a vision of angels who told them he is alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women said. They didn't see him."

²⁵ Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! Your dull minds keep you from believing all that the prophets talked about. ²⁶ Wasn't it necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" ²⁷ Then he interpreted for them the things written about himself in all the scriptures, starting with Moses and going through all the Prophets.

²⁸ When they came to Emmaus, he acted as if he was going on ahead. ²⁹ But they urged him, saying, "Stay with us. It's nearly evening, and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ After he took his seat at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight. ³² They said to each other, "Weren't our hearts on fire when he spoke to us along the road and when he explained the scriptures for us?"

³³ They got up right then and returned to Jerusalem. They found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴ They were saying to each other, "The Lord really has risen! He appeared to

Simon!" ³⁵ Then the two disciples described what had happened along the road and how Jesus was made known to them as he broke the bread.

These are the ancient words revealed to us anew.

Thanks be to God. Amen

MESSAGE: "The Sunset Road That Turned to Dawn"

With thoughts from William Barkley

"This is another of the immortal short stories of the world. It tells of two people who were walking towards the sunset. It has been suggested that that is the very reason why they did not recognize Jesus. Emmaus was west of Jerusalem. The sun was sinking, and the setting sun so dazzled them that they did not know their Lord. However that might be, it is true that the Christian is someone who walks not towards the sunset but towards the sunrise. Long ago it was said to the children of Israel that they journeyed in the wilderness towards the sunrising (Numbers 21:11). The Christian goes onwards, not to a night which falls, but to a dawn which breaks – and that is what, in their sorrow and their disappointment, the two on the Emmaus road had not realized."

(This is an interesting incite from Rev. Barkley. I have never thought about this before – the sunrise as opposed to the sunset in the lives of Christians.)

This story “tells us of the ability of Jesus to make sense of things. The whole situation seemed to have no explanation. For these followers of Jesus all their hopes and dreams are shattered. There is all the poignant, wistful, bewildered regret in the world in their sorrowing words, ‘We were hoping that he was the one who was going to rescue Israel.’

These are the words of people whose hopes are dead and buried. Then Jesus came and talked with them, and the meaning of life became clear and the darkness became light. It is only in Jesus that, even in the bewildering times, we learn what life means. *(Is that true for you?)*

This story tells us of the courtesy of Jesus. He made as if he would have gone on. He would not force himself upon the; he waited for their invitation to come in. *(Just as we must invite Jesus into our hearts.)* God gave us the greatest and the most perilous gift in the world, the gift of free will; we can use it to invite Christ to enter our lives or to allow him to pass on.

This story tells us how he was known to them in the breaking of bread. This always sounds a little as if it meant the sacrament of communion; but it does not. It was at an ordinary meal in an ordinary house, when an ordinary loaf was being divided, that Jesus was recognized. It is not only at the communion table we can be with Christ; we can be with him at the dinner table too. He is not only the host in his Church; he is the guest in every home. The Christian lives always and everywhere in a Christ-filled world. *(Do you agree? Do we recognize Jesus in our everyday world?)*

This story tells us of two people who, when they received such great joy, hastened to share it. It was a seven-mile journey back to Jerusalem, but they could not keep the good news to themselves. Even after they had warned the man who joined them on their journey that walking at night was dangerous, they did it anyway. They no longer feared any enemy. They were strengthened by knowing Jesus.

This story tells how, when they reached Jerusalem, they found others who had already shared their experience. It is the glory of any Christian to live in a fellowship of people who have all had the same experience.

This story tells us that Jesus appeared to Peter. That must remain one of the great untold stories of the world. But surely it is a lovely thing that Jesus should make one of his first appearances to the man who had denied him. It is the glory of Jesus that he can restore the penitent sinner's self-respect.

This story has many lessons for us. Perhaps you can find more. What goes through your mind when you read this story? There's always more to a Bible story than we first think. Keep digging.

Amen.

***UNISON READING OF THE UCC STATEMENT OF FAITH:**

We believe in you, O God, Eternal Spirit, God of our Savior Jesus Christ and our God, and to your deeds we testify:

-You call the worlds into being, create persons in your own image, and set before each one the ways of life and death.

-You seek in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

-You judge people and nations by your righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

-In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Savior, you have come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to yourself.

-You bestow upon us your Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

-You call us into your church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be your servants in the service of others, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

-You promise to all who trust you forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, your presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in your realm which has no end.

**Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you.
Amen.**

PASTORAL PRAYER: Dear Lord, we gather here together to hear your stories and to hear lessons for all of us. Hopefully we take the time to listen. In our busy lives, we never have enough time; enough time

to pray; enough time to spend with our dearest friend, Jesus. Perhaps our priorities for our time don't include time for listening, meditating, wondering, being grateful, giving thanks. Help us find that precious time.

However at this very moment we take the time to think about and pray for ourselves and others. We can tell God what's in our hearts as we strive to give time to God and others who are less fortunate than ourselves. There are so many people with so many needs. The task seems insurmountable. Yet, if we can help just one of God's children, that's one less person in need.

We pray for all those affected by the storms that happened last week. Their lives were turned around by twisters. How do they begin again? Be with, comforting God, and help them seek the sunrise, not the sunset.

We remember all those on our prayer list and all others who are suffering, lonely, grieving, bewildered, confused. Bring light into their beings, dear Lord, so they see you and recognize your love.

Together we pray all these things in our hearts and in your's. . .

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is

in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen

OFFERTORY INVITATION: Our offerings are a sacrifice of thanksgiving in the spirit of Jesus, who gave everything, even life itself, to proclaim God's inclusive love. God calls all people to become children of the promise, and to this end we dedicate our gifts.

***UNISON OFFERTORY PRAYER:**

Thank you, God, for the privilege of joining with Christ in the proclamation of your love for all people. May the ministries we support serve to unite people across all differences, building up the body of Christ and reaching out to the world with healing energy. Bless these gifts and all who give in any way to make your love known. Amen.

***RESPONSIVE COMMISSION AND BLESSING:**

One: We have been called away from a corrupt generation. We have been ransomed from our futile ways.

All: Life's meaning is not to be found in silver or gold. We have found new life in trusting God.

We have been born anew through God's enduring word.

We embrace a living faith and hope.

We purify our souls through obedience to truth.

We love one another deeply from the heart.

Christ is alive in our midst.

Christ goes with us along all life's roads.

We go out to serve in Christ's name.

May the love of Christ find expression in us.

Amen. **Amen.**

PRAYER LIST: Urban Baum, David Seneczyn, Becky Ballard, Rosemary Williams, Jack O'Day, Ronald Bopp, Syd Safriet. Mary Holcomb, Beth Sheldon