



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Third Sunday of Easter, April 26, 2020

by Garland F. Pierce

Recognizing Resurrection

Luke 24:13-35

24:13 Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem,

24:14 and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.

24:15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them,

24:16 but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

24:17 And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad.

24:18 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?"

24:19 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,

24:20 and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him.

24:21 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.

24:22 Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning,

24:23 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.

24:24 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."

24:25 Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!

24:26 Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?"

24:27 Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

24:28 As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on.

24:29 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.

24:30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.

24:31 Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

24:32 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?"

24:33 That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together.

24:34 They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!"

24:35 Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Easter 2020 will be recorded as historic, marked by social distancing which prevented many of the faithful from gathering in traditional ways to celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior. The coronavirus pandemic robbed many of so much; but, it has not been able to take away creativity. Easter 2020 was celebrated with virtual and drive in services, social distancing Easter parades, and virtual Easter egg and scavenger hunts. Little ones scanned rooms and screens to find prizes and symbols of new life to their delight and that of their elders. COVID-19 has cruelly stolen so much from so many; but, it has given many of us time to pause, to be, and to be together even as some of us are together apart. Many have been given time and space for reflection and recognition.

I am not certain what I would expect Jesus to do after conquering death and the grave; but, I am not certain that the first thing to come to mind would be to go on a long walk and listen to the faithful. But walk and talk with the two on the Emmaus Road is exactly what he did. After all, he was an itinerant preacher and teacher who had walked many miles and roads answering questions with questions and giving glimpses of the kingdom of God.

I guess I would have anticipated post-resurrection urgency. I know that even as I shelter in place, ministry continues and even has intensified. Deadlines still loom, needs to be addressed and responded to intensify, To Do lists and Zoom calls multiply, all while the total numbers of unemployed and uncertain and inflected and affected increase. While some rush to reopen because of the demands of the economy, capitalism, racism, and greed, faithful ministry also feels compelled by the urgency of NOW!

Surely, the risen Jesus has somewhere he needs to be. Surely, he has some urgent ministry matters to claim his attention. Yet, when invited in by the faithful to dine and spend time with them, he accepts. After all, he was the one who declared later that he stands at the door and knocks and if any hears and opens, he will come in. His urgent ministry matter is to come in and share. After all, he is Immanuel—God with us.

The Resurrected One takes time—time to walk along with the faithful as they question themselves and him, as they grieve and try to figure out how to go on in the midst of uncertainty, fear, and death. The Resurrected One takes time—to sit, tarry, share, and bless and break bread. Something about that blessing and breaking of the bread by the Bread of Life caused the faithful to recognize Resurrection. Then, the pace picks up. He vanishes; they get up right away to go and tell, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!"

COVID-19 has robbed us of much. Now, for far too many, their scavenger hunts are for bread. Still it has given many of us time and space to recognize Resurrection in the breaking of bread—in fellowship and sharing. In due time, the pace will pick up for most of us. Try not to let the urgency of now rob you of this time and space. **Recognize!**

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, reflect and/or share—what have you recognized during this period of pandemic that you had not recognized before? Have you recognized signs of new life? What? Who? Where? How?

PRAY: Lord, you are so patient with us. You brought us through Easter when we rejoiced at the news of the resurrection of your Son our Savior. You were with us in the upper room when we remained hidden out of our fears, sharing with Thomas our doubts and anxieties. Now you come to us on the road. You come to us in our everyday lives, moving out of our traditional settings of worship into the work world. But we aren't always ready for you and don't always see you or feel your presence. We let so many things crowd in on our lives and these intrusions blot out our awareness of your presence. Forgive our inattentiveness and our stubbornness. Help us keep our hearts open to you, to see and tell the good things you have done in our lives. For we ask this in Jesus' name. AMEN.

Adapted from <https://www.ministrymatters.com/worship/entry/1028/worship-connection-april-26-2020>

ACT:

1. If you are able and so moved, donate to a local food bank or pantry so that others might be able to "find and break bread."

*2. Refer to the youth and family activity that accompanies this devotion.

Song:

Break Thou the Bread of Life
AMEC Hymnal, #209

1. Break Thou the bread of life, Dear Lord, to me,
As Thou didst break the loaves be-side the sea;
Be-yond the sa-cred page I seek Thee, Lord;
My spir-it pants for Thee, O liv-ing Word!
2. Bless Thou the truth, dear Lord, to me, to me,
As Thou didst bless the bread by Gal-i-lee;
Then shall all bond-age cease, All fet-ters fall;
And I shall find my peace, my all-in-all.
3. Thou art the bread of life, O Lord, to me,
Thy ho-ly Word the truth that sav-eth me;
Give me to eat and live with Thee a-bove;
Teach me to love Thy truth, For Thou art love.
4. O send Thy Spir-it, Lord, Now un-to me,
That He may touch my eyes, And make me see;
Show me the truth con-cealed with-in Thy Word,
And in Thy book re-vealed I see the Lord. A-men.

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, bread, Easter lilies, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



The Christian Education Department, AMEC Publishing House, and others will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.