

Kuhn Memorial Presbyterian Church
Barboursville, West Virginia
April 26, 2020
Third Sunday of Easter

Call to Worship Psalm 116

The Lord is gracious and merciful,
and hears me when I call.

The Lord has been good to you.

**The Lord has delivered my life from death,
my eyes from tears,
and my feet from stumbling.**

**I come with thanksgiving,
and call on the name of the Lord.**

Prayer of the Day

**O God, whose presence is veiled from our eyes,
when we do not recognize you,
may our hearts burn within us,
and when feeling is lost,
may we cling in faith to your Word
and the power of bread broken
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
One God, now and forever. Amen.**

Hymn *Hymn of Promise (in honor of the 50th anniversary of Earth Day) Natalie Sleeth*

In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed an apple tree;
in cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be,
unrevealed within its season, something God alone can see.

There's a song in every silence, seeking word and melody;
there's a dawn in every darkness, bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future; what it holds a mystery,
unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

In our end is our beginning; in our time, infinity;
in our doubt there is believing; in our life, eternity.

in our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory,
unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

Scripture Reading Luke 24:13-35

This is a favorite Scripture passage for many of us. My affection for it has been influenced by the beautiful painting of this scene by Robert Zund, *Gang nach Emmaus*. Public domain.

Since we are familiar with it, let's imagine ourselves in this story. How does the road feel beneath our weary feet? Do we see the footprints of small animals? What do we hear? Do we notice any fragrances in the air?

Jesus' friends are headed home to Emmaus after witnessing his death and resurrection. You have experienced both the deepest grief and highest joy in a few short days. I would be sad and exhausted, longing for the comforts of home and hearth, a bath, a cup of tea, a good night's sleep.

What would you be feeling?

Suddenly a stranger appears who wants in on our conversation. In this time of social-distancing, such behavior would be avoided. But, this man was somehow different. He was curious. What were we discussing?

After we relay the news of recent days, this man engages us in a lively and detailed discussion of the Hebrew Scriptures, stories we all know "by heart." As darkness was falling, and the hour was late, we invite Jesus to our home for a meal and a night's rest. Although he was not the owner of the house, Jesus assumed the role of host at the table. And the text says, "They recognized him in the breaking of the bread."

And then he was gone from their sight.

A friend of mine says that when she was a young girl, she and her sister shared the task of setting the table for family meals. They always set an extra place, for Jesus, the unseen guest at every meal. Sometimes, when a person is near death, they report that they see Jesus waiting for them, to take their hand and lead them into the next life. It is great comfort for them and for us.

Jesus is always with us, though we may not see him. How have you recognized him? In the breaking of the bread? In the breaking of an addiction? In the healing of old or fresh wounds? In the embrace of loved ones?

I'd like to suggest a practice to take up this week: Let us be alert to the presence of Jesus. Maybe you could set an extra place at the table for him, like Peg and her sister were taught. Maybe you will initiate a conversation with someone you don't know well. Maybe your faith could be your common ground. Maybe when you are putting those sandwiches together at lunchtime, you will pause a moment and recognize Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

Prayer

Holy God.

we pray for all those born this day, and ask your richest blessing on their lives;

we pray for all who face new ventures and challenges;

for those troubled by loneliness, despair or grief;
for all who feel cut off from your presence and love;
for those who are exhausted by work or worry or everyday life;
for those whose lives have been disrupted by the pandemic and its collateral damage;
for all who will find their rest in you today.
We give you thanks for all signs of hope, healing, opportunity, and joy.
We pray for the earth entrusted to our care... its resources, treasures, beauty, and mystery.
Draw near to those we lift now before you...
And now, with the confidence of the children of God, we pray, **Our Father...Amen.**

Blessing

May the work of your hands bring Christ honor;
may your speech and actions reflect the Word of Life;
and may the service you offer
be driven by the indwelling Spirit. **Amen.**