



## Third Sunday of Easter      April 18, 2021

### Introduction

*The gospel for the third Sunday of Easter is always one in which the risen Christ shares food with the disciples, meals that are the Easter template for the meals we share. In today's gospel, Jesus both shares the disciples' food and shows them the meaning of his suffering, death, and resurrection through the scriptures, the two main elements of our Sunday worship.*

### Thanksgiving for Baptism

*You may want to have a small bowl of water available to remind you of your baptism!*

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

**Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

Refreshed by the resurrection life we share in Christ,  
let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

We thank you, risen Christ,  
for these waters where you make us new,  
leading us from death to life, from tears to joy.  
We bless you, risen Christ,  
that your Spirit comes to us  
in the grace-filled waters of rebirth,  
like rains to our thirsting earth,  
like streams that revive our souls,  
like cups of cool water shared with strangers.

Breathe your peace on your church when we hide in fear.  
Clothe us with your mercy and forgiveness.  
Send us companions on our journey as we share your life.  
Make us one, risen Christ.  
Cleanse our hearts. Shower us with life.  
To you be given all praise, with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**Gathering Hymn   ELW # 361 /LBW # 141**

***The Day of Resurrection***

*Listen and sing along [here](#).*

## Prayer of the Day

Holy and righteous God, you are the author of life, and you adopt us to be your children. Fill us with your words of life, that we may live as witnesses to the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## Psalm: Psalm 4

- <sup>1</sup>Answer me when I call, O God, defender of my cause;  
you set me free when I was in distress;  
have mercy on me and hear my prayer.
- <sup>2</sup>**“You mortals, how long will you dishonor my glory;  
how long will you love illusions and seek after lies?”**
- <sup>3</sup>Know that the LORD does wonders for the faithful;  
the LORD will hear me when I call.
- <sup>4</sup>**Tremble, then, and do not sin;  
speak to your heart in silence upon your bed.**
- <sup>5</sup>Offer the appointed sacrifices, and put your trust in the LORD.
- <sup>6</sup>**Many are saying, “Who will show us any good?”  
Let the light of your face shine upon us, O LORD.**
- <sup>7</sup>You have put gladness in my heart,  
more than when grain and wine abound.
- <sup>8</sup>**In peace, I will lie down and sleep;  
for you alone, O LORD, make me rest secure.**

## Second Reading: 1 John 3:1-7

*God has loved us in order to make us children of God. Though we do not yet know the full details of our future existence, we trust that God will reveal it just as God revealed Jesus to take away our sins.*

*Read the complete text [here](#).*

## Gospel: Luke 24:36b-48

*In this account of an appearance after his resurrection, Jesus opens the minds of the disciples to understand him as Messiah. Jesus convinces them that he has been raised and sends them on a mission to proclaim the message of repentance and forgiveness.*

*Read the complete text [here](#).*

## Reflection on the Text

When I ponder the events of the past year or so, they hardly seem possible. When we listen to the nightly news, we hear about tragedies and natural disasters and violence that threaten us from many directions. But the one consistent headline for over a year has been the global pandemic of Covid-19.

That a virus – an enemy far too small for us to see for ourselves – could threaten the health and safety of everyone around the world seems so unlikely that we can scarcely believe it. And yet, that became our reality practically overnight.

Like many of you, I recently received my second vaccination. I find myself both filled with joy at a sense of safety from this terribly dangerous and unpredictable illness and yet, with a bit of disbelief. Can this vaccination truly bring safety from what has plagued us? It seems I share something with the disciples in today's gospel text!

This is the Third Sunday of Easter. On these three Sundays, we have read three different post-Resurrection stories. And to add to our confusion, they have been from three different gospels. On Easter Sunday, we read from Mark 16 about the encounter that the women had with a young man at the empty tomb, with no risen Jesus in sight. Last week, we read from John 20, about Jesus appearing to the disciples in the upper room. Today we read from Luke 24.

Each of these gospel writers – witnesses to the Resurrection, called to share the Good News with others – told the story in a different way. Let me back up just a bit in Luke's gospel to help make sense of today's passage:

Early on the first morning, the women went to the tomb and found it empty except for two men in dazzling clothes. When they told Peter, he ran to the tomb, found it empty and left, amazed by what had happened.

Later that same day, two discouraged and grieving followers were walking home from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus, when they encountered a stranger on the road, who listened with interest to their woes and then began to explain how everything that had happened fulfilled what had been written in the scriptures. They invited the stranger to stay with them and at the supper table, he blessed and broke the bread, was revealed to them as the Risen Christ, and then promptly vanished!

Those two disciples decide to head back to Jerusalem to tell the eleven apostles what had happened, and while they are all talking, Jesus miraculously appears among them, leading to the conversation we read in today's gospel passage.

The two things that stand out to me are near the beginning of this text and near the end. Eugene Peterson writes in **The Message** that the disciples "*couldn't believe what they were seeing. It was too much; it seemed too good to be true.*"

There it is, the joy and disbelief that I feel about the vaccine, evident in the disciples, too.

I wonder whether we share more in their joy or their disbelief about the Resurrection. Do we and others fall into disbelief, unable to fathom how this is possible and why it matters? If that is the case, I hope we hear the words Jesus spoke: “why do doubts arise in your hearts?”

Even though we cannot see Jesus for ourselves the same way that those disciples did on that long ago Easter night, we know that they went on to share the Good News, beginning in Jerusalem wherever they went, in spite of danger or even death. We can trust their testimony as truth.

Or, after the story has been shared in the gospels and in sermons and Sunday school lessons for two thousand years, has it become so tame that we forget how amazing it is that God raised Jesus from the dead and gave him new life in a Resurrection body, a body that was somehow able to pass through locked doors and yet enjoy a snack?

Do we ignore what a joyous event this really is for all of us? A vaccine may protect us in this life, but the news of the Resurrection is far more important. It holds the promise of new and amazing life – for all of us, for all of eternity! I hope we cling to that joy every time we repeat the Alleluias of this Easter season!

The second thing that stands out to me in this passage is what the believers – all of them, throughout time, including us – are called to do. Like the disciples who shared the message of what they had heard and seen, we are called to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ who suffered, died, and was raised from the dead for us.

We are called to share the message of repentance and forgiveness of sins. We are called to be witnesses of all of these things! May God give us the courage and strength to do just that, every day of our lives. Christ is risen. Alleluia! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

**Hymn of the Day ELW # 631 / LBW # 315    *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling***

*Listen and sing along [here](#).*

## **Nicene Creed**

*We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:*

**We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,**

**God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God, begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary  
and became truly human.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,\*  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love.

*A brief silence.*

Living God, in the midst of Easter joy we are still filled with questions and wondering. Open our hearts and minds as we encounter the scriptures, so that the church embodies repentance and forgiveness in the name of Jesus to all nations.  
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Creating God, like a master artist you have fashioned the universe out of your love and delight. Heal your creation where it is in need of restoration. Provide all the inhabitants of earth a peaceful and sustainable home. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of all, the nations hunger and thirst for your righteousness. Many call on you for guidance and strength. Answer their hopes with the peace of Christ and give your lovingkindness to national, state, and local leaders of people.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Healing God, you hear the cries of those in need and answer them in their distress. Grant to those who are sick and suffering your compassion and nurse them back to health and wholeness, especially those we name now. Be close to the hearts of the lonely.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Loving Parent, you have given us such love that we should be called the children of God. Reveal yourself to us so that we in this community of faith will become more and more like you in our mutual love and bold witness. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

God of all times and ages, those who have died in you now see you as you are. We thank you for their lives among us (*especially*). Assure us of the peace you have promised, that we may join them in everlasting life. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **Lord's Prayer**

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**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 trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

**Closing Hymn ELW # 382 / LBW # 131**

***Christ Is Risen! Alleluia!***

*Listen and sing along [here](#).*

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Today's reflection was written by Pastor Ruth Ann Sipe.