

Jordan Station United Church

April 26, 2020 – 3rd Sunday of Easter
Rev. Anita Spiller

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Stained Glass Window Sermon Series – The Scriptures Come Alive

Luke 24:28-35 (NRSV)

This is not the LAST SUPPER from Luke 22:14-18 The Institution of the Lord's Supper

¹⁴ When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵ He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶ for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; ¹⁸ for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

But Rather Luke 24:13-49 A Paraphrase (NRSV) "He Has Known of them in breaking of the bread."

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.

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, 'Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.' And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were

disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

One: For the word of God in scripture,
for the word of God among us,
for the word of God within us;

All: Thanks be to God

This Sermon was written in part by Pastor Chrissy, Winthrop Congregational Church and modified by Rev. Anita for today's presentation.

As a Christian pastor, Holy Week and Easter are deeply important times for me, and my emotions span from heartbroken to joyful and everything in between. The journey from the cruelty of the cross, to the mourning at the tomb and finally the joy of the Resurrection. It has been interesting to be working on an Easter sermon in the middle of the summer as we commemorate our scripture in stained-glass windows. A wonderful reminder that Resurrection isn't just an Easter thing. It's an everyday thing. We are indeed an Easter people so what better time to celebrate Easter than in the heart of July?

So, what do YOU think this window represents? Pause...

The Last Supper? Or the Road to Emmaus? So, a funny thing happened this week. Tell the story of two windows with two different scriptures and two different messages.

Let me tell about this window and when we serve communion we can talk about The Last Supper.

Luke's story of the Resurrection is similar to John's and Mark's in at least one way. The author of Luke also stated that it was women followers of Jesus who were the first to find the tomb empty. Like the women in Mark, an angelic visitor, well, this time two, visits them and tells that Jesus has risen.

Unlike Mark, they immediately run and tell their friends. Like John, Peter comes back to investigate, though without the disciple whom Jesus loved, a figure who is absent from Luke. In Luke, it's not just Thomas who demands more evidence. It's all of the disciples. When the women tell them what they heard and saw, nobody believed them. In the English translation, it says that the disciples believed the women to be telling an idle tale. The original Greek is much stronger. It says that the disciples thought the women were telling them lies. Even after Peter saw the death shroud empty, it is not clear from the story if he believed the women.

Much like John's version of the Resurrection, the disciples needed to see something more in order to believe. To be fair, most of us would. Here's how Luke tells us they got their proof. Two disciples were walking on the way to a place called Emmaus. They were talking about everything that had happened. They were probably complaining about the weird story that the women had told them. This guy started walking with them and asked what was going on. In what is probably the sweetest sentence in all of Luke, the author tells us that they "stood still, looking sad" and then asked the stranger how he could have managed to not know everything that has gone on over the last several days. They must have been the kind of sad that can't help but tell someone what is going on, even if it is someone they don't know and don't recognize. It was not a sadness that they could keep to themselves. So, they told the stranger everything. I wonder if they were surprised when he began to talk about the Son of Man or when he began to interpret Scripture with them, trying to help them make sense of this murder in the course of Jewish history. It seems like what he said helped them, because, as we heard at the beginning of our reading today, when they came to the point when they could have parted ways with him, they didn't. They invited him to stay.

It is interesting to me that they don't come to know who Jesus is when he is teaching them. The interpretations he offered must have been compelling, or they would have let him keep walking. But, the scripture doesn't say that they knew him because he seemed smart like Jesus. The story says they knew him only when he broke the bread and blessed it and shared it with them. Maybe he had a particular way of doing it. Like maybe he had a particular way that he moved his wrist when he tore the bread. Or, maybe the blessing he offered was the same one he always offered when they ate together. Or maybe it was the simple act of sharing what was there, and making sure everyone had something that was enough to jog their memory. As he shared the bread, suddenly they knew. The text reads "their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished

from their sight." And, they talked to each other and said out loud what they had been feeling during their whole walk. Their hearts burned when he spoke. They wondered if something special was happening. They knew something special was happening when he broke bread with them.

Luckily, when they told the rest of the disciples, Jesus appeared with them and offered up his hand and feet to prove that he was indeed real. But, even seeing his wounds didn't quite convince them that he was alive. The author of Luke tells us that even in their joy, they were disbelieving and still wondering. Unlike in John, seeing wasn't believing. Hearing wasn't even believing. No, in Luke, eating was believing. This time, rather than share bread with them, he asked if they had anything to eat and they offered him fish. He ate it. And, he taught them some more. And they believed. Food, yet again, is the key to helping them understand who he is.

I read an article this week that argued that being able to share food together is one of the key activities of human community. There is that old saying that you are what you eat. Well, you are what you eat, and how you eat, and with whom you eat. Eating is a core activity for survival. Sharing food is a core activity of community. Being able to eat food indicates that you are alive and healthy, and being about to share food means that community matters to you and you want to develop a relationship. Jesus eats at lunch and he shared his dinner. And, he left a legacy of ways that these oh so common acts can become more than thoughtless actions. Eating and sharing can become commemorations of the Resurrection. Holy Communion is a kind of anniversary celebration. It reminds us of New Life every time we take it. And, this is why I've been thinking about baking bread all week.

Even though this is not a time when we typically have communion, I couldn't preach on this incredible window without also serving communion. We couldn't honour the Glory of God and the memory of Flight Lieutenant Richard Blake Palmer as gifted by his parents without serving communion. It seemed important to talk about communion together. Jesus did not leave his followers a whole host of rituals to follow if he should die. We Protestants really think he only left us two, Baptism and Communion. I think it is telling that these two rituals are related to things we do everyday, wash ourselves and eat. Something so common is adapted, changed, and made holy. It becomes a commemoration. It becomes a sign of the Resurrection. Each time we share the bread and the cup, we remember the Resurrection. Each time we serve our neighbors, be it the ones in the pew right next to us or

the ones who visit the food pantry down the road, we remember the Resurrection.

Each time we recognize that the food we eat and the food we share connect us to one another, we remember the Resurrection. And, when we make sure that our habits of eating are sustainable, we are remembering the Resurrection. Eating together, be it Holy Communion or dinner at home on a Tuesday night, doesn't have to be a thoughtless act that we do just to survive. It can be a sign of the Resurrection.

When we share our meal together today, I hope you'll think about a few things. How can we make sure that all God's children have a chance to share in the bread of life? How can our eating habits better reflect our values as followers of Christ? Are the workers who pick the food treated fairly? Do the animals we eat have a life of dignity? Do we offer to help do the dishes after we make a meal together? And, lastly, how does this act of Communion, this sharing of bread and cup with the people who sit next to me each week, help me see Jesus? When the disciples saw the breaking of the bread, they saw Jesus. I pray that eating together can be just as eye-opening an experience for the rest of us. Thanks be to God. Amen