

**“...in the breaking of the bread...”**

**First Reading: Acts 2:14a, 36-41**

*Today’s reading is the conclusion of Peter’s sermon preached following the giving of the Holy Spirit to the apostles on the day of Pentecost. The center of his preaching is the bold declaration that God has made the crucified Jesus both Lord and Christ.*

<sup>14a</sup>Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed [the crowd], <sup>36</sup>“Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

<sup>37</sup>Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” <sup>38</sup>Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup>For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” <sup>40</sup>And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” <sup>41</sup>So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

**Psalm: Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19**

*I will call on the name of the Lord. (Ps. 116:13)*

<sup>1</sup>I love the Lord, who has | heard my voice,  
and listened to my | supplication,

<sup>2</sup>**for the Lord has given | ear to me whenev- | er I called.**

<sup>3</sup>The cords of death entangled me; the anguish of the grave | came upon me; I came to grief and sorrow.

<sup>4</sup>**Then I called upon the name | of the Lord:**

**“O Lord, I pray you, | save my life.”**

<sup>12</sup>How shall I repay the Lord for all the good things God has one for me?

<sup>13</sup>**I will lift the cup | of salvation and call on the name | of the Lord.**

<sup>14</sup>I will fulfill my vows | to the Lord in the presence of all God’s people.

<sup>15</sup>**Precious in your | sight, O Lord, is the death | of your servants.**

<sup>16</sup>O Lord, truly I | am your servant; I am your servant, the child of your handmaid; you have freed me from my bonds.

<sup>17</sup>**I will offer you the sacrifice | of thanksgiving  
and call upon the name | of the Lord.**

<sup>18</sup>I will fulfill my vows | to the Lord in the presence of all God’s people,

<sup>19</sup>**in the courts of | the Lord’s house,  
in the midst of you, O Jerusalem. | Hallelujah!**

**Gospel: Luke 24:13-35**

*The colorful story of Jesus’ appearance to two disciples on the road to Emmaus answers the question of how Jesus is to be recognized among us. Here, he is revealed through the scriptures and in the breaking of bread.*

<sup>13</sup>Now on that same day [when Jesus had appeared to Mary Magdalene,] two [disciples] were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, <sup>14</sup>and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. <sup>15</sup>While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, <sup>16</sup>but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. <sup>17</sup>And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. <sup>18</sup>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?” <sup>19</sup>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, <sup>20</sup>and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. <sup>21</sup>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. <sup>22</sup>Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, <sup>23</sup>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. <sup>24</sup>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.” <sup>25</sup>Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! <sup>26</sup>Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” <sup>27</sup>Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

<sup>28</sup>As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. <sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. <sup>31</sup>Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. <sup>32</sup>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?” <sup>33</sup>That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. <sup>34</sup>They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” <sup>35</sup>Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

*O God, your Son makes himself known to all his disciples in the breaking of bread. Open the eyes of our faith, that we may see him in his redeeming work, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.*

**Amen.**

*Touch the earth lightly, use the earth gently,  
nourish the life of the world in our care:  
gift of great wonder, ours to surrender,  
trust for the children tomorrow will bear.*

This is the first verse of a hymn, Touch the Earth Lightly, written in 2003 by Shirley Erena Murray of New Zealand (Tune: TENDERNESS - C. Gibson), one of countless hymns she has written over the years. It appears in our hymnal, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* under the Creation section, with a number of other also very inspiring hymns.

The words of this hymn are of course so fitting at this time, as we conclude Earth Week 2020 – on the one hand a week of celebration of the rebound of the ecosystem due to Covid19 shutdowns, which limit travel, air travel, and much economic activity, on the other a very muted one due to physical distancing restrictions still so very firmly in place.

So ironic – Covid 19 has done for the planet in one month what the most dedicated scientists and energetic eco-warriors have not been able to do in decades – slow down, turn off, and allow nature to begin to heal – a very unexpected silver lining to this very dense, very heavy Covid-19 cloud hanging over us.

*We who endanger, who create hunger,  
agents of death for all creatures that live,  
we who would foster clouds of disaster--  
God of our planet, forestall and forgive!*

When will it be over? Will it ever be over? Even when it is “over” what will the post Covid 19 world look like? What will we have learned from this experience? Will our consuming/abusing/taking ways shift to something more in line with what our Officer of Health, Dr. Bonnie Henry keeps repeating "be kind, be calm and be safe", or will we slide back into old habits?

Today is also Easter 3 –with this lovely story of the road to Emmaus, where two disciples encounter Jesus unknowingly, and then see him revealed to them in the breaking of the bread. In fact, there is an underlying theme of seeing/not seeing Jesus in these post-resurrection accounts – Mary in the garden on Easter morning, Thomas needing to see to believe, the disciples realizing it was Jesus when he told them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat, and they came up so full of fish that they were almost tearing apart, now these two in Emmaus.

*<sup>35</sup>Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.*

A much loved story, yes, but perhaps a difficult story to hear on this Sunday and this Easter season, for while technology has allowed us to carry on with worship and stay connected in our separation during this time, one thing Covid 19 has taken away for us is just that – gathering around the communion table to participate, to receive, to take in, to live out....

There has been much debate on this subject, via teleconferences, conversations, emails, and online debates on Facebook, looking at the question from all sides...

What if we each have some bread and some wine, and call in via a Zoom meeting, and as the pastor says the words, we just partake? Or maybe the pastor can celebrate in front of the camera and we can just watch...shades of the story of Lazarus and the rich man...what about drive-through communion - theoretically possible, but it still does not permit group participation together. And on it goes. If you are interested to follow this conversation further, you may enjoy a debate between the Rev John Boyd and the Rev Jane Gingrich, a clergy couple who live in Kamloops. Here is the link: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PW5jtYFI7RA>).

Here at Christ Lutheran, in consultation with Church Council, we have decided for now that we will refrain from having communion, a kind of extended Lenten fast if you will, and we live for the day when we can join in worship together again...almost an echo of the words of Jesus at the last supper: *Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.*' (Mark 14.25).

What a day of celebration it will be – like an Easter upon Easter - when we are once again in our beloved sacred space, our familiar pews, gathering, singing, worshipping, praying, and simply being with each other in a very real and tangible way.

*Let there be greening, birth from the burning,  
water that blesses and air that is sweet,  
health in God's garden, hope in God's children,  
regeneration that peace will complete.*

But until that day, we must seek the presence of Christ in other ways. Christ comes to us in scripture, in our weekly online worship, or by simply opening our Bibles; Christ comes in word and song and prayer and blessing. Christ comes to us in the phone call or email from a friend seeing who we are, or when we make the call also. Christ comes to us in the opportunities to worship with communities all over the world via technology. Christ comes to us in the opportunity to make a donation to the food bank or other organizations reaching out to the most vulnerable...

Christ comes to us in the beauty of nature – if we only open our eyes to see...Christ comes to us in our daily meals, either alone or with others, if we only pause to appreciate the meal before us, and the company around us...Christ comes to us in song –either sung by us no matter how good or how badly, but joyfully, or in any number of YouTube videos. Wherever, however, Christ is there for us, not hidden, but only waiting for us to open our eyes and our hearts to invite him in.

As echoed so profoundly in one of the many prayer blessings written by St. Patrick of Ireland:

*I arise today through the strength of Christ's birth with his baptism, through the strength of his crucifixion with his burial, through the strength of his resurrection with his ascension, through the strength of his descent for the judgment of Doom.*

*I arise today  
Through the strength of heaven;  
Light of sun, Radiance of moon  
Splendor of fire,  
Speed of lightning, Swiftmess of wind,  
Depth of sea, Stability of earth,  
Firmness of rock.*

*I arise today  
Through God's strength to pilot me;  
God's might to uphold me,  
God's wisdom to guide me,  
God's eye to look before me,  
God's ear to hear me,  
God's word to speak for me,*

*God's hand to guard me,  
God's way to lie before me,  
God's shield to protect me,  
God's hosts to save me  
Afar and anear,  
Alone or in a multitude.*

*Christ shield me today Against wounding  
Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,  
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,  
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,  
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,  
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,  
Christ in the eye that sees me,  
Christ in the ear that hears me.*

*I arise today  
Through the mighty strength  
Of the Lord of creation.*

*(A prayer of St. Patrick)*

Where do you see Jesus Christ? The world awaits your discovery...  
*God of all living, God of all loving,  
God of the seedling, the snow and the sun,  
teach us, deflect us, Christ reconnect us,  
using us gently, and making us one.*

Christ is risen, Alleluia!  
Christ is risen, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Alleluia, indeed – a most blessed Sunday and Earth Week to you all, as you touch the earth lightly...and in the signature words of Dr. Bonnie Henry: "be kind, be calm and be safe."

Amen.