

“Christ Arose”

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UCC at The Villages, FL  
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Easter Sunday Son Rise

Luke 24:13-34

“<sup>14</sup>As they were talking and thinking about what had happened,  
<sup>15</sup>Jesus came near and started walking along beside them.  
<sup>16</sup>But they did not know who he was.”

Luke 24:14-16

Let us pray... O God,  
Grant us vision for how you are already here and how we should proceed  
as members of your Kingdom, your Body, your Church.

Amen

Some of us got up early this morning to watch the Sun rise  
and imagine Christ rising from the grave.  
Christ’s resurrection is an event that took place long ago  
and yet we watch as if - it were going to happen- today.

And so it has been for the generations ever since,  
keeping watch and hoping for a glimpse of understanding  
of what Jesus’ followers experienced centuries ago  
and anticipating his return.

We have the witnesses of women and men who were convinced  
that Jesus had returned to life after a brutal death  
of scourging and crucifixion.

None of them actually saw the resurrection,  
but some of them met Christ afterwards –  
including the Apostle Paul who himself had been an enemy of Christ.

Paul got knocked off his high horse – so to speak,  
meeting Christ on the road to Damascus  
in a vision that left him temporarily blind to the world.

Those disciples on the road to Emmaus had been blinded  
from recognizing the risen Christ right away –  
neither did Mary Magdalene at the tomb  
nor Peter and the fishermen when Jesus called to them from the shore at Galilee.  
He was hidden from their sight like the Sun when it is hidden from view by the clouds –  
yet their eyesight was correctable with the proper ‘lenses’.

This winter, we had the most successful Bible study I have ever seen  
in any church I served.

And I attribute that to the teachers Mike West and Bob Buckland and the curriculum  
of “Living the Questions” and Reading the Bible Again For the First Time.

Willard, p.2

This is a new approach to understanding the Bible whose core message is that we are people living in a diverse world  
of religious and scientific ideas mixed together  
and that we need to be less concerned about  
*proving what happened* in the Bible beyond a shadow of a doubt  
and more concerned about *asking why these stories were included*.

It should not be just an investigation of facts to win an argument,  
but a quest for truth to shape our faith so we are not afraid to ask questions.  
If the Bible is what it says it is,  
then it comes from individuals' experiences of God shared with others  
who found common ground through their experiences,  
and then, to make comparisons with the scripture narratives that came before.  
And that congruency and synchronicity and serendipity that we find  
are what make the Bible a living Word that God is still speaking to us  
in our time.

The Apostle Paul often spoke and wrote about the Body of Christ  
as synonymous with God's Kingdom of Heaven and that the Church  
was the principal form that this takes.  
Beloved Community – what Martin Luther King spoke and wrote about and died for,  
is comparable to that ideal, embracing human harmony and the love of God.  
The Body of Christ, then in a manner of speaking,  
is an underlying social reality waiting to be recognized and invited to stay  
for food and fellowship like the supper at Emmaus.

My 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Sunday School teacher, Gladys Bartholomew,  
basically said the same thing about God's Kingdom of Heaven:  
Just as the objects in a room at night become visible when we turn on a lamp,  
so it is with the Kingdom of Heaven when we see with 'the eyes of faith'.  
It already exists, even though it is not yet visible.

Where do we find this Kingdom of Heaven, this Beloved Community,  
this Body of Christ?  
Start looking where people are hungry, sick, or afraid.  
Start looking where people are mistreated, ignored, or alone.  
Start looking for Christ in the people you meet –  
and not assume right off they are strangers or worse.  
Start looking for Christ in yourself to find the patience, courage, and love  
that is so desperately needed.  
But know to be like Christ is to be more true to who you already are.

Willard, p.3

For you have a role to play in this great story  
perhaps in ways you haven't imagined yet,  
and that it is no longer about waiting for Christ to show up,  
but for allowing him to have a place in your life,  
allowing yourself to recognize him already at work.

As we bear witness today to the perennial hope of Christ's return,  
may that coincide with the eternal hope of peace on Earth,  
an enduring fellowship of humankind that delights in variety  
and welcomes the new day as an unfolding adventure  
to challenge us to bring forth the best of what we were created to be.

Christ has already risen three days and 2,000 years ago.

So, let us believe that means he is already here with us  
still speaking and healing and liberating human beings.

And let us believe that God's love is for all of the world's benefit,  
for all nations of people and creatures great and small,  
even the Earth itself as it continues to turn, day by day, year by year –  
just as it has from centuries before and will do so for millennia yet to come.

Hear the Good News:

Christ is risen for God so loved the world  
that there be peace on Earth and goodwill to all.

Amen

Luke 24:13-34

<sup>13</sup>That same day two of Jesus' disciples were going to the village of Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>As they were talking and thinking about what had happened, <sup>15</sup>Jesus came near and started walking along beside them. <sup>16</sup>But they did not know who he was.

<sup>17</sup>Jesus asked them, "What were you talking about as you walked along?"

The two of them stood there looking sad and gloomy. <sup>18</sup>Then the one named Cleopas asked Jesus, "Are you the only person from Jerusalem who didn't know what was happening there these last few days?"

<sup>19</sup>"What do you mean?" Jesus asked.

They answered:

Those things that happened to Jesus from Nazareth. By what he did and said he showed that he was a powerful prophet, who pleased God and all the people. <sup>20</sup>Then the chief priests and our leaders had him arrested and sentenced to die on a cross. <sup>21</sup>We had hoped that he would be the one to set Israel free! But it has already been three days since all this happened.

<sup>22</sup>Some women in our group surprised us. They had gone to the tomb early in the morning, <sup>23</sup>but did not find the body of Jesus. They came back, saying that they had seen a vision of angels who told them that he is alive. <sup>24</sup>Some men from our group went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said. But they didn't see Jesus either.

<sup>25</sup>Then Jesus asked the two disciples, "Why can't you understand? How can you be so slow to believe all that the prophets said? <sup>26</sup>Didn't you know that the Messiah would have to suffer before he was given his glory?" <sup>27</sup>Jesus then explained everything written about himself in the Scriptures, beginning with the Law of Moses and the Books of the Prophets. <sup>28</sup>When the two of them came near the village where they were going, Jesus seemed to be going farther. <sup>29</sup>They begged him, "Stay with us! It's already late, and the sun is going down." So Jesus went into the house to stay with them.

<sup>30</sup>After Jesus sat down to eat, he took some bread. He blessed it and broke it. Then he gave it to them. <sup>31</sup>At once they knew who he was, but he disappeared. <sup>32</sup>They said to each other, "When he talked with us along the road and explained the Scriptures to us, didn't it warm our hearts?" <sup>33</sup>So they got right up and returned to Jerusalem.

The two disciples found the eleven apostles and the others gathered together. <sup>34</sup>And they learned from the group that the Lord was really alive and had appeared to Peter.