

**APRIL 23, 2023**

**10:00 A.M.**

**THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER**

**PRELUDE**

**GREETINGS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, JOYS & CONCERNS**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

We need your presence on the long road, Lord.

**The road between fear and hope,**

**the road between the place where all is lost and the place of resurrection.**

Like the disciples walking the road to Emmaus, we need your company!

**Jesus, stand among us, in your risen power, let this time of worship,  
be a hallowed hour.**

**OPENING PRAYER & THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**God of new life and hope, we come together this morning in joy;  
for each Lord's Day is a celebration of Easter, a festival of hope,  
a day of victory, an expression of new life.**

**We pray that during this hour, miracles will take place:**

**That those of us who are discouraged will gain confidence,**

**That any who have gathered here despairing will receive hope,**

**And those who are disillusioned will regain faith.**

**For Jesus lives and is present and asks us**

**that when his disciples pray together they are to say:**

**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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.**

**And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:**

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

**\*HYMN 365**

**"Alleluia! Alleluia!"**

*(Tune: Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee')*

## **ACT OF CONFESSION & ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

We are sinners.

**Yes, we are sinners.**

We deserve God's judgement.

**Yes, we deserve God's judgement.**

Our God is a merciful and loving God who, like the prodigal son's father, is waiting and watching for us to return and seek forgiveness.

Let us turn to our loving Father and admit our sins. Let us pray.

**O Jesus Christ, sometimes we are so busy talking with each other that we fail to find you beside us. We walk on, so focused on our questions that we do not create silent spaces which would allow you to speak with us and enlighten our journey.**

**Stay with us, Jesus Christ. Reach out towards us and invite us to pause and meet with you, we pray.**

**As we look at our lives and that of the world around us, we are sometimes too anxious to share our real questions or our doubts and fears. We keep them within us in troubled silence.**

**Stay with us, Jesus Christ. Reach out towards us and invite us to pause and meet with you, we pray.**

**We call your name, O Christ, and hope to discover you here in our community of vulnerable faith. Amen.**

Whether we believe it, or not, Jesus Christ never leaves us nor forsakes us.

**Let us open our hearts to receive the grace which Christ brings to us in faithfulness.**

We are forgiven! Thanks be to God. Amen.

## TIME WITH OUR YOUNG DISCIPLES

Show the children ***three very different pictures of Jesus***  
from ***three different cultures***,

and ask, “**Which of these shows what Jesus looked like?**”

You **might explain the different cultures**  
from which each picture comes.

After they make their choices,  
tell them that no one really knows the shape of Jesus’ face,  
or the color of his skin or eyes or hair.

Tell the children that you have a surprise:  
you can show them what Christ really looked like.

**LET THEM LOOK AT THEMSELVES IN A MIRROR.**

Tell them that **Christ can be seen today**  
in the faces of Christian people  
— especially in times of praise and fellowship and service.

## **PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION**

**Jesus our Guide, you explained the Scriptures  
and revealed yourself to the disciples at Emmaus.  
Now, by your Spirit, enlighten our minds  
to understand the witness of Scripture  
and ignite our hearts to recognize and receive you. Amen.**

## **INTRODUCTION TO SCRIPTURE**

**During the 50 days of the Easter season,  
we hear the various Gospel accounts of Jesus appearing to the  
disciples after his resurrection and before his ascension.**

**This morning we hear the familiar story often titled  
“The Road to Emmaus.”**

**The account of the journey to Emmaus is unique.**

**It Appears **only** in the gospel of Luke  
and details the appearance of the risen Jesus to Cleopas  
and another unnamed disciple on the road to Emmaus.**

**The story is rich in irony as **we the readers** are aware of Jesus’  
identity **long before** the disciples.**

**The exact location of Emmaus is unknown today.**

**Depending upon the ancient manuscript that is used,  
Emmaus could have been 7 miles or 19 miles from Jerusalem.**

**We need to remember that Luke,  
who has been concerned with the **centrality** of Jerusalem  
throughout his gospel (e.g., 9:51, 53; 13:33-34; 17:11; 18:31;  
19:11), therefore movement **toward** Emmaus is probably **not** as  
significant as the movement **from** Jerusalem.**

**In other words, Luke presents the picture of two disciples who are  
leaving the gospel’s center stage to travel to its periphery, even if for  
a short time (cf. v. 33).**

**Luke is setting the stage for Pentecost and Jesus' message moving far beyond Jerusalem into the Gentile world.**

**SCRIPTURE READING Luke 24:13-35**

**The Message**

**<sup>13-16</sup> That same day two of them were walking to the village Emmaus, about seven miles out of Jerusalem. They were deep in conversation, going over all these things that had happened. In the middle of their talk and questions, Jesus came up and walked along with them. But they were not able to recognize who he was.**

**<sup>17-18</sup> He asked, "What's this you're discussing so intently as you walk along?"**

**They just stood there, long-faced, like they had lost their best friend. Then one of them, his name was Cleopas, said, "Are you the only one in Jerusalem who hasn't heard what's happened during the last few days?"**

**<sup>19-24</sup> He said, "What has happened?"**

**They said, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene. He was a man of God, a prophet, dynamic in work and word, blessed by both God and all the people. Then our high priests and leaders betrayed him, got him sentenced to death, and crucified him. And we had our hopes up that he was the One, the One about to deliver Israel. And it is now the third day since it happened. But now some of our women have completely confused us. Early this morning they were at the tomb and couldn't find his body. They came back with the story that they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. Some of our friends went off to the tomb to check and found it empty just as the women said, but they didn't see Jesus."**

**<sup>25-27</sup> Then he said to them, "So thick-headed! So slow-hearted! Why can't you simply believe all that the prophets said? Don't you see that these things had to happen, that the Messiah had to suffer and only then enter into his glory?"**

**Then he started at the beginning, with the Books of Moses, and went on through all the Prophets, pointing out everything in the Scriptures that referred to him.**

**28-31 They came to the edge of the village where they were headed. He acted as if he were going on but they pressed him: “Stay and have supper with us. It’s nearly evening; the day is done.” So he went in with them. And here is what happened: He sat down at the table with them. Taking the bread, he blessed and broke and gave it to them. At that moment, open-eyed, wide-eyed, they recognized him. And then he disappeared.**

**32 Back and forth they talked. “Didn’t we feel on fire as he conversed with us on the road, as he opened up the Scriptures for us?”**

**33-34 They didn’t waste a minute. They were up and on their way back to Jerusalem. They found the Eleven and their friends gathered together, talking away: “It’s really happened! The Master has been raised up—Simon saw him!”**

**35 Then the two went over everything that happened on the road and how they recognized him when he broke the bread.**

**Leader: This is the Word of the Lord. People: Thanks be to God.**

## **SERMON “Well-Known Christians”**

**“Who is the best-known Christian in the world today?”**

**Not too many years ago, many of us would have answered, “Billy Graham.”**

**But Billy Graham has joined the Church Triumphant and **no single** successor has emerged to claim the title.**

**No doubt our Roman Catholic sisters and brothers would say it is Pope Francis**

**Truth be told, the Christian world is **not** unified.**

**It has not been unified since the Great Schism of 1040, when the Roman Catholics broke with the Eastern Orthodox over an obscure theological point in the Nicene Creed.**

**Whatever “well-known Christians” there may be are ordinarily particular to our own denominational traditions.**

Yet, there is another sense we can look at the phrase “well-known,” a sense that refers **not to *breadth* of knowledge, but *depth* of knowledge.**

This way of being **well-known** is **not** limited to religious celebrities, like the pope.

It is available to **any** honest seekers who open their hearts to a living relationship with Jesus Christ.

It is not about the number of people who **know us**, but how deeply ***we are known*** by our Lord.

Luke tells us how, as Jesus broke bread in the presence of two hungry travelers, “their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.”

That word “recognized” (the Greek *epiginosko*) can be translated “well-known.”

Literally, it means that once the disciples’ eyes are opened, ***they know him well.***

In fact, the risen Lord knows those weary wanderers on the Emmaus Road **before** they know him.

He knows them through and through.

What a dramatic moment it is, that instant when their eyes are opened, and they recognize him!

Then, just as quickly, Jesus vanishes out of their sight.

Who are these two people — these two travelers — and how did they get there?

We only know the name of one of them, he was called Cleopas.

The second one is anonymous, and some have speculated this other disciple may have been Cleopas’ wife, although no one can say for certain.

**Luke says the two of them are walking to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem — although, curiously, no archaeologist has ever been able to locate Emmaus on a map.**

**That is not to say the village never existed; it was just one of those blink-twice-and-you-miss-it kind of places.**

**However, what happens in that small village is an encounter between the risen Jesus and two disciples, people who **love** him deeply, **but** who have reluctantly **given up** on ever seeing him again.**

**Yet, even with all that strong emotion swirling about, the details of their meeting are hardly spectacular.**

**Let's compare for a moment the road to Emmaus with the road to Damascus.**

**You remember the road to Damascus, the place where Paul has his conversion experience.**

**Acts, Chapter 9, tells the Damascus Road story.**

**Paul — then named Saul — is traveling to Damascus, hoping to round up and arrest local Christian leaders, then haul them before the religious authorities.**

**Suddenly, there is a flash of lightning and a voice from heaven: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”**

**Saul falls to the ground, blinded.**

**His traveling companions are so bewildered they cannot even speak.**

**The voice commands Saul to go the city and await instructions.**

**He does just that.**

**What choice does he have?**



Eventually, a Christian named Ananias shows up, lays hands on him, and miraculously heals him.

Now compare **that** to the road trip of the disciples on their way to Emmaus.

The Emmaus Road **is nothing like** the Damascus Road.

On the Emmaus Road there is

**no** lightning in this story,

**no** voice from the sky,

**no** miracle cure —

just a couple ordinary folks walking down the road.

A stranger catches up with them.

They walk on for a bit, and eventually small talk becomes big talk.

They discuss Jesus, who died, and — some say — has been raised.

Ironic how this stranger teaches those disciples from the Hebrew Scriptures, in much the same way their teacher did, **but they still do not recognize him.**

They finally come to Emmaus.

Cleopas and his companion ask their new friend to stay on and join them for dinner.

He seems to be in a hurry to get someplace else.

But then, abruptly, he agrees, and goes home with them.

Just as the stranger is breaking bread, **it suddenly dawns** on the two of them who he is.

But before they know it, **he is gone.**

It is only then that Cleopas and his companion remember how they had felt along the road, as the stranger was teaching them ... “Like our hearts were on fire!”

They rush back to Jerusalem, only to discover that — through some inexplicable resurrection power — the stranger has just been there, also.

The dramatic heart of this story is, of course, the moment of recognition: “and their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.”

In that single moment in time — as Jesus stands there, the two halves of a broken loaf balanced on his upturned palms — he becomes **well-known** to them.

### ***Well-known.***

There **is** another place in the New Testament where that Greek word, *epiginosko*, occurs.

It is in First Corinthians, Chapter 13, the famous “hymn to love” — the passage so many brides and grooms choose for their weddings.

**1 Corinthians 13:12 says: “then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.”**

There is that phrase again!

The whole line could be translated literally, **“then I will know well, even as I have been well-known.”**

It **is not** about fame.

It is about being **deeply known** by those important to you.

In the monologue from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, the title character holds in his hand the skull of a long-deceased friend.

Hamlet says “Alas, poor Yorick. Horatio, I knew poor Yorick well.”

Shakespeare’s writing in English rather than Greek, but the intent is the same.

When Hamlet says of his court jester, Yorick, “I knew him well,” he captures the same sort of depth knowledge that transcends mere acquaintance.

Hamlet's monologue is so poignant because the jester Yorick was a man Hamlet deeply loved and admired.

Among the most dreaded fears in life — especially in life's later years — is the prospect of no longer being **well-known**.

We are not talking about fame, but ordinary human knowing, the way we know our family and friends.

Those who live to advanced years often see their circle of friends diminish in size until almost none are left.

There are always the younger generations, of course — and those who truly age well learn how to befriend them — but it is not the same.

If there is truly no one left who can nod with recognition at the same stories, who can hum along with the same tunes, then indeed there is a **loss of knowing**.

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul reassures us that because God's love in Christ is eternal, we will continue — in life or in death — to be beloved of God, **to be well-known in** that deepest sense.

Yet, how can we be certain, at the last, that Christ will **recognize us?**

Another passage of Scripture provides the answer.

It is **NOT** an easy answer, but an answer it is and why we who sit in Presbyterian Churches are called to be Matthew 25 Churches.

It is a passage that leads us to take a long, hard look at the type of life we have been living.

In Matthew 25, Jesus' parable of the last judgment — of the eternal judge separating the sheep from the goats — the disciples ask him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?"

Jesus replies, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

The Greek verb, here, is different, but the implication is the same:

Jesus **promises to recognize us,**

to treat us as belonging to him,

**if** we have **first** given recognition and aid to the needy in our midst.

If you **know *them* well,** Jesus is saying, then I promise to **know *you* well.**

So, how is it these two disciples come to **know Jesus?**

Two ways, according to Luke.

**The first** is as the three of them are walking down the road together, discussing the Scriptures.

The recognition is still not total at that point, but evidently something is beginning to stir within them as they talk with this stranger about God’s word. “*Did not our hearts burn within us ...?*”

**The second** way the disciples come to know Jesus is as he breaks the bread after they have arrived in the village.

Luke’s community could not have failed to notice the symbolism.

Two things — **Word and sacrament** — must be present for Cleopas and his companion to know Jesus, and for him to deeply **know** them in return.

They are the two essential “marks of the church” — or proof of the church’s true existence — according to the Protestant Reformers.

Wherever you have the Word truly proclaimed and the sacraments rightly administered, according to John Calvin, there you have the true church of Jesus Christ.

Through days of pandemic and its aftermath, we are learning how Word and sacrament can be central to the church’s life, even over the Internet.

**Wouldn't that have blown Calvin's mind?**

**As it was in Calvin's Geneva, it was also true in that tiny, flyspeck village called Emmaus.**

**Whenever we open the Word together and study it, and whenever we gather around the Lord's table to break bread — either literally or virtually — Christ can be counted upon to be present with us.**

**There is a story about the funeral of Charlemagne, holy Roman emperor, and ruler of the Frankish people in the early Middle Ages.**

**Not since the fall of Rome had one king unified so much of western Europe under his rule.**

**Charlemagne governed most of present-day France, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Italy.**

**When this renowned emperor died,  
his soldiers bore his casket,  
in a mighty procession,  
from his castle to the great cathedral at Aix.**

**There, the procession was met by the local bishop.**

**The bishop physically barred the cathedral door with his body.**

**“Who comes?” the bishop demanded, according to ancient custom.**

**“Charlemagne, Lord and King of the Holy Roman Empire,”  
proclaimed the emperor's herald.**

**“Him I know not,” the bishop replied. “Who comes?”**

**The herald,  
a bit shaken, replied,  
“Charles the Great, a good and honest man of the earth.”**

**“Him I know not,” the bishop said again. “Who comes?”**

Trying a third time,  
the herald responded,  
“Charles, a lowly sinner, who begs the gift of Christ.”

To which the bishop — Christ’s representative on earth —  
responded, “Enter! Receive Christ’s gift of life!”

Charlemagne, during his life, was certainly **well-known**.

But in death, the **only knowing** that truly mattered was the fact that  
he **was known by** Jesus Christ.

There is **one** other aspect of this story to consider.

As Jesus and the two disciples complete their walk to Emmaus,  
Jesus makes as if to travel on.

Verse 29 says, “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.”

“**Stay with us**” is the prayer of those two disciples who, at that point,  
do not fully recognize their traveling companion — although  
perhaps a subconscious awareness is growing.

“**Stay with us**” is so often the prayer **we want** to pray to Jesus.

**We want him to stay —**  
**here, with us,**  
**on familiar turf,**  
**where we can domesticate him**  
**and control his every move.**

But that is **not** the prayer we should be praying because Jesus never  
stays for long.

Yes, Jesus is present in our lives, but he is always on the move.

**How much of our own desire to experience Jesus only in a familiar building — or others like it, echoes those disciples’ plea, “Stay with us”?**

Maybe the Lord’s message to us is that he refuses to dwell in the sanctuary permanently, any more than he accepted the invitation of the good residents of Emmaus to stay with them.

Our Lord has other roads to walk, other places he must be.

If Matthew 25 is any guide, those other places are wherever human griefs and hungers are most evident.

We **TAKE** Jesus to no one.

Jesus is already out there,  
waiting for us to **SHOW** others his  
mercy,  
love,  
and forgiveness with our actions.

### **MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION**

*How are you “well-known” by Jesus?*

### **CALL TO FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP**

#### **OFFERING**

**\*DOXOLOGY**    *Praise God from whom all blessings flow.  
Praise Him, all creatures here below.  
Praise him above ye heavenly host.  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

#### **\*PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

Like the disciples at Emmaus, we offer what we have.  
They offered their company, their table, their bread.  
We invite you to be with us as we offer you our love, our devotion, these gifts.  
May our eyes be opened to your holy presence, now and always. Amen.

**\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**            “The Apostles’ Creed”            (Back of Hymnal)

**\*HYMN 676**                            “O Jesus, I Have Promised”

### **\*CHARGE & BENEDICTION**

May God, who comes to us in the things of this world, bless our eyes  
and be in our seeing.

**May Christ, who looks upon us with deepest love, bless our eyes  
and widen our gaze.**

May the Spirit, who perceives what is and what may yet be,  
bless our eyes and sharpen our vision.

**May the Sacred Three bless our eyes and cause us to see. Amen.**

### **WORSHIP RESOURCES**

**Call to Worship:** inspired by Luke 24:13-35, where the disciples encounter Jesus written by Carol Penner and posted on Leading in Worship. <http://carolpenner.typepad.com/>

**Prayer of Confession:** It comes from the <http://pilgrimwr.unitingchurch.org.au/> website.

**Benediction:** Jan L. Richardson's *The Painted Prayerbook* <http://paintedprayerbook.com/>

**Offering Prayer:** written by Carol Penner, and posted on Leading in  
Worship. <http://carolpenner.typepad.com/>

**Invocation:** [Homiletics Online](#)

**Prayer of Illumination:** [Worship@North website. https://northchurchindy.wordpress.com/](#)

### **SERMON RESOURCE**

Carl Wilton, [Homiletics Online](#)

### **CHILDREN'S SERMON**

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### **COMMENTARY on Luke 24:13-35**

[Homiletics Online](#)