

## Easter 3 - April 26, 2020

### Hymn LSB 477 "Alleluia, Alleluia! Hearts to Heaven"

1 Alleluia, alleluia!

Hearts to heav'n and voices raise:  
Sing to God a hymn of gladness,  
Sing to God a hymn of praise;  
He who on the cross a victim  
For the world's salvation bled—  
Jesus Christ, the King of Glory,  
Now is risen from the dead.

2 Alleluia, Christ is risen!

Death at last has met defeat:  
See the ancient pow'rs of evil  
In confusion and retreat;  
Once He died, and once was buried:  
Now He lives forevermore,  
Jesus Christ, the world's Redeemer,  
Whom we worship and adore.

3 Alleluia, alleluia!

Glory be to God on high:  
Alleluia to the Savior  
Who has gained the victory;  
Alleluia to the Spirit,  
Fount of love and sanctity!  
Alleluia, alleluia  
To the triune Majesty!

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### Opening Address

**The Invocation:** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**The Confession:** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Let us then confess our sins to God our Father. Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

**The Absolution:** In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for His sake, God forgives us all our sins. To those who believe in Jesus Christ, He gives the power to become the children of God and bestows on them the Holy Spirit. May the Lord, who has begun this good work in us, bring it to completion in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Prayer of the Day:** Let us pray: Almighty God and Father, You know our sorrows, sin, joys, hopes, and dreams. As we walk through this vale of tears, help us to have open eyes to see Our Risen Lord walking beside us, strengthening, helping, and forgiving us, all our days in this earthly pilgrimage and journey; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**The First Reading** is written in the book of Acts, chapter 2, verses 14 and 36-41.

<sup>14</sup> But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: <sup>36</sup> Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” <sup>37</sup> Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” <sup>38</sup> And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” <sup>40</sup> And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” <sup>41</sup> So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

**The Epistle Reading** is from St. Peter’s first letter, chapter 1, verses 17-25.

<sup>17</sup> And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, <sup>18</sup> knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. <sup>20</sup> He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you <sup>21</sup> who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

<sup>22</sup> Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, <sup>23</sup> since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; <sup>24</sup> for “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, <sup>25</sup> but the word of the Lord remains forever.” And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

**The Holy Gospel** is according to St. John, chapter 20, verses 19 to 31.

<sup>13</sup> That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles<sup>[a]</sup> from Jerusalem, <sup>14</sup> and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened.

<sup>15</sup> While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew 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 is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?” And they stood still, looking sad. <sup>18</sup> Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” <sup>19</sup> And he said to them, “What things?” And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet

mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, <sup>20</sup> and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up 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 happened. <sup>22</sup> Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, <sup>23</sup> and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even 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 him they did not see.” <sup>25</sup> And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” <sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

<sup>28</sup> So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, <sup>29</sup> but they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.” So he went in to stay with them. <sup>30</sup> When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. <sup>31</sup> And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. <sup>32</sup> They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” <sup>33</sup> And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, <sup>34</sup> saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” <sup>35</sup> Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

**Apostles' Creed:** I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

**Hymn LSB 476 "Who Are You Who Walk in Sorrow"**

- 1 Who are you who walk in sorrow  
Down Emmaus' barren road,  
Hearts distraught and hope defeated,  
Bent beneath grief's crushing load?  
Nameless mourners, we will join you,  
We who also mourn our dead;  
We have stood by graves unyielding,  
Eaten death's bare, bitter bread.
- 2 Who is this who joins our journey,  
Walking with us stride by stride?  
Unknown Stranger, can You fathom  
Depths of grief for one who died?  
Then the wonder! When we told You  
How our dreams to dust have turned,

Then You opened wide the Scriptures  
Till our hearts within us burned.

3 Who are You? Our hearts are opened  
In the breaking of the bread—  
Christ the victim, now the victor  
Living, risen from the dead!  
Great companion on our journey,  
Still surprise us with Your grace!  
Make each day a new Emmaus;  
On our hearts Your image trace!

4 Who are we who travel with You  
On our way through life to death?  
Women, men, the young, the aging,  
Wakened by the Spirit's breath!  
At the font You claim and name us,  
Born of water and the Word;  
At the table still You feed us,  
Host us as our risen Lord!

5 "Alleluia! Alleluia!"  
Is the Easter hymn we sing!  
Take our life, our joy, our worship  
As the gift of love we bring.  
You have formed us all one people  
Called from ev'ry land and race.  
Make the Church Your servant body,  
Sent to share Your healing grace!

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### **The Sermon: "Relatable Disciples"**

Some of my favorite books, shows, and movies are often the ones with the most relatable characters. It is where I can see myself or others I know in the various characters and people. You know those scenes when you watch or read them and say, "I would totally do that..." or "I could see Jim being like that." When you have those moments, it adds a whole other dimension to the book, show, play, or movie. There is something to be said about relatability.

Of all the people who have encountered Jesus in the Gospels, the most relatable would probably have to be the Emmaus Road Disciples. They are, at the very least, the most relatable out of everyone who saw the resurrected Lord. For starters, they seem, normal. They were among the followers of Jesus, but they certainly weren't the famous ones. Luke only tells the name of one Cleopas, and we know nothing about the other: no name, no age, no sex, no ethnicity, no relationship to Cleopas...nothing! This person is just along for the ride. Adding to this relatability, they encounter Jesus, but they didn't know it was Him until He was gone! How often do we miss Him in our lives? They couldn't recognize Jesus standing before them, and

they couldn't understand the Scriptures, even as Jesus explained to them. Nevertheless, though, Jesus makes it into their lives, like ours. He walks with them, talks with them, sits with them, breaks bread, and gives thanks with them. He transforms their lives just like He transforms our own.

These are two disciples that we can relate to. These disciples are two that we can identify with, and see ourselves. These two disciples show the experience of the Christian life. This morning, we will see how we identify and relate with these two disciples. We'll see how we say, "That's me!" We will see four ways in how we do so.

Luke introduces us to these disciples as they are leaving Jerusalem, talking about what recently had happened. As they are walking, Jesus joins them, and they are kept from recognizing Him. Wanting to join in their conversation, He asks, "What are you talking about?" Shocked, they stop in their tracks, overcome by sadness and unbelief at His question. Cleopas answers, "**Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?**" That would be like a person asking now, "What is the deal with everything closed, people staying inside, and everyone wearing masks?" Like Cleopas, we might say, "Really, do you live under a rock?" But the One Who was the talk of the town says, "**What things?**" So, Cleopas tells Him. He goes through his own account of Holy Week, and then reveals the reason for their sadness and disappointment.

"**But we had hoped that He was the one to redeem Israel.**" They had hoped that Jesus would deliver them from the Romans. That He would usher in God's Kingdom. That He would save the day...but, He is dead, His body is missing, and no one has seen Him. Their hopes are as dead as He is. These two disciples leave Jerusalem with heavy hearts and dashed hopes. And, we know all about that, too, don't we?

We all have many hopes in this life. We have hoped for many things, and we have been let down along the way. Maybe that promotion never came, that friend never returned that call or came through. Maybe that expensive vacation wasn't all that great, or that new gizmo didn't bring the happiness you hoped for. Maybe, like the Emmaus disciples, we hoped in things that Jesus never promised, and then were disappointed when it didn't come true. Jesus came to redeem, but not from the Romans.

On vicarage, we lived next to the poorest city in Michigan. It was nicknamed "Little Detroit." For a town of about 10,000 people, it had a lot of churches, but many of them were of the prosperity Gospel type. It was not uncommon to see or hear of people giving what little they had in the hopes that God would multiply that two-fold, five-fold, or ten-fold! But He never promises that, or other things, like healing, prosperity, and good times all the time. It was sad to see those people mislead and let down.

However, we can also have hope in the right things that didn't come true. We can hold fast to God's Word and His promises, but when we look at the world around us, it seems that God forgot, or that the opposite is happening. We know dashed hopes and shattered dreams like them. We can certainly relate.

Their walk and journey continues. Hearing Cleopas' answer, Jesus replies, "**O foolish ones,**" "**O anoetoi.**" The word literally means, "without sense," "not understanding." That is what Jesus gets at here. He essentially says, "O you without sense, without understanding. **Slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!**" In other words, "Don't you get it?" "**Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?**" As they walk and talk with Jesus, Jesus gives them a Bible Study with Him as Teacher and Subject. He takes them through Genesis to Malachi, the entire Old Testament, explaining to

them “**all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.**” They will see He did have to suffer, die, and be raised. They will see He did redeem Israel, and that He did fulfill it all. They will no longer be without sense and understanding. Their eyes and minds will be opened, and they will have the key to understanding the Old Testament: Him!

By faith, our eyes, too, have been opened to see Who Jesus is and what He has one. We have been taught this. He is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. He holds it all together. It is about Him! Jesus is author and subject. One church father explains it this way: The Old Testament is like a giant tapestry. Jesus is the red strand that weaves it altogether. Cut a strand, you see Jesus behind it.

When we see that, like the Emmaus disciples, we understand that our hope in Jesus is never misplaced or misguided. Jesus is the One Who has saved us with His necessary death and resurrection. He is the One Who heals and helps, Who protects and provides. He is the One Who remains our constant companion and counselor, even when we are hurt, disappointed, let down, and screaming at the Heavens. By faith, Jesus has opened our eyes and hearts, and we see Who He is, and what He has done. With those disciples, we can certainly relate.

As the group approaches Emmaus, Jesus pretends to go farther. Jesus is like that friend who says, “I don’t know what I am going to do tonight. I have no plans, no people to hang out with, nowhere to go, nothing to do, no movies to watch, no one to call.” What are they hinting at? An invitation to hang out! That is what Jesus does here. He wants them to invite Him. They do.

As Jesus joins them at the table, Luke says, “**He took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them.**” It is hard not to continue with the words of Institution there! These verbs and words evoke memories of Jesus feeding the 5,000 and the Last Supper, where He institutes Communion. Even if Luke doesn’t intend for us think of the Lord’s Supper here, Jesus’ willingness to join these unaware disciples shows His commitment to them, to community, and for fellowship with His people. Jesus abides with them!

He does with us, too. Jesus makes His way to our tables and lives, too. In the Kooi household, we always do the common table prayer before a meal. Lately, Mia has been joining us in saying this, and loves it when we hold hands as a family when we say it. Oftentimes, it then means Dawn or I sprawled over the kitchen table to grab her hand as we speak it together, holding each other, asking our Lord to join us. Is this not what we ask in the common table prayer? “Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest?” Jesus does reach out and join us. He makes Himself at home with us, and in our lives.

More than that, He joins His people, ushering Himself into our lives, even *before* we recognize Him. The Emmaus disciples didn’t realize it was Jesus until it was too late, and He vanished. Jesus is with us, too, whether we feel it or not, know it or not, confess it or not. He holds us tight! He acts for us and on our behalf, even if we don’t see it. He provides for us, even if we don’t recognize it. He forgives us, even when we are unaware of our sin. He blesses though we are undeserving, and loves us, even though we are unlovable. What a Lord!

Jesus is committed to the fellowship and community of all His people. He will join us back together soon, in person, and in His Supper with all believers in Christ. The Church is gathering of believers where our Lord abides and is present. Like those disciples, we have an abiding Lord. We can certainly relate.

Now, as Jesus gives them the bread, their eyes are opened, and they finally recognize Him! But He vanishes from their sight and everything clicks. They say, “**Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while He opened to us the Scriptures?**”

They wonder how they missed it! But, now having seen the Resurrected Lord, they can't keep this to themselves. They can't keep it in. They have to go back. So they run the three miles back to Jerusalem, find the 11, and exclaim, "**The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!**" The Easter message had changed them. It transformed them. It made them confessors!

This message does the same to us, doesn't it? It transforms us. It makes us confessors. We can't keep this in, can we? A poem I received about Easter the other days says it: "And what happened then?/ Well...the story's not done./What will YOU do?/Will you share with one/Or two or more people needing hope in this night?/Will you share the source of your life in this fight?/The churches are empty-but so is the tomb,/And Jesus Is Victor over death, doom, and gloom!" Can we keep that message inside? Can we contain it within? This hope...this joy...this message...has to come out! This message forever changes us. It forever transforms us. We can't help but go back to Jerusalem and spread the word! With those disciples, we can certainly relate! In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Prayer of the Church**

You have heard our pleas for mercy, O Lord, and given up Your Son to be our Savior. Hear us now as we come to You on behalf of ourselves and all people according to their needs.

#### *Brief silence*

Our hearts have burned in us, O Lord, as Your Word has been read and preached. Keep our faith from growing cold and grant us grace, that we may not waver in faith or succumb to temptation. Give to us and to our children receptive hearts, that we may hear and, hearing, believe and, believing, be steadfast in this faith and hope all our days. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer. You have cleansed us, O Lord, with water and the Word in Baptism, and You have marked us as Your own people. Give to us grace, that we may live out this faith in holy lives, lifting up Your name in word and works for as long as we live. Guide us, that we may purify our souls by living in obedience to Your Word and in brotherly love for one another. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Bless Your Church, O Lord, that she may welcome the stranger in Christ's name and manifest the unity of the faith in the bonds of love. Bless Matthew, presiding in our Synod; \_\_\_\_\_, our district president; \_\_\_\_\_, our circuit visitor; and \_\_\_\_\_, our pastor(s). Bless those training for church-work vocations. Bless each of us as we live out our baptismal vocation of worship, witness, prayer and service. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Guard our nation, O Lord, that we may enjoy peace and security in the face of threat and danger. Bless Donald, our president; the Congress of the United States; \_\_\_\_\_, our governor; and all state and local officials, that they may fulfill their offices faithfully. Bless the members of the armed forces who protect us, and teach the nations the ways of peace. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Deliver us from all our afflictions, and grant us strength to bear all our burdens, O Lord. Hear us in particular for \_\_\_\_\_ and those whom we name in our hearts. According to Your gracious will, heal the sick, relieve those who suffer, comfort the grieving and give peace to the dying. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Stay with us, O Lord, and be our strength in weakness and our hope in time of despair. Your gracious will once kept the saints in faith even unto death. Keep us, we pray, with them in Your

faith and fear, that we may be found faithful when Christ comes again in His glory to bring to fulfillment all things, once and forevermore. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Through the breaking of the bread, O Lord, feed us upon the flesh of Christ and grant us to drink His blood in faith. Forgive our sins, strengthen our faith, build up our unity as a congregation and Synod, and equip us through this communion to love You and love one another as You have loved us. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Accept, O Lord, this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving we bring for all Your goodness and generosity. And with our song of praise, accept our tithes and offerings, that Your Church may have the resources to proclaim Your Gospel and care for the poor and those in need. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

These and whatever other things we need, O Lord, we pray You to grant us in the name of and for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose death has made full atonement for our sin and whose resurrection has granted to us the promise of our own joyful resurrection to eternal life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, we pray. Amen.

**The Lord's Prayer:** Let us pray the prayer Jesus has taught 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.

**The Benediction:** The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious unto you. The Lord look on You with His favor and give you peace. Amen.

**Final Hymn** LSB 603 "We Know That Christ Is Raised"

1 We know that Christ is raised and dies no more.  
Embraced by death, He broke its fearful hold;  
And our despair He turned to blazing joy.  
Alleluia!

2 We share by water in His saving death.  
Reborn, we share with Him an Easter life  
As living members of a living Christ.  
Alleluia!

3 The Father's splendor clothes the Son with life.  
The Spirit's power shakes the Church of God.  
Baptized, we live with God the Three in One.  
Alleluia!

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**Closing Address and Announcements**

**Postlude:** "The Word Is So Near" Michael Card