

Grace and peace to you my friends and fellow sojourners from Jesus Christ - Risen.

You just heard the gospel reading from Luke, anyone want to take a stab at what my first question was when I first read this reading? What **same** day? What is the context, the flow of this story? First, you should recognize that this reading is from the Gospel of Luke but this is the liturgical year of Matthew where **most** gospel readings come from Matthew with some from John and occasionally others from Mark and Luke. The stories in the different gospels are often similar but almost never the same. Second, although stories seem similar, quite often sequencing and timing are different and further compounded by the sequencing of readings in the Revised Common Lectionary. For instance, two weeks ago on Easter our gospel reading was the Marys at the tomb from Matthew and then last week the gospel reading was about the disciples and Thomas from John and now this week, we have the road to Emmaus from Luke.

I am going to try to simplify the context or storyline using all four gospels. You are permitted to groan or laugh in disbelief now. All **four** gospels identify **women** as the only ones who go to the tomb on the first day of the week, Sunday. Three of the gospels name the women **at** the tomb with Luke being the only one to wait and name the women after they **return** from the tomb to where the disciples and other followers were. All **four** gospels refer to one or two angels or men in white or white robes. Only two gospels, Luke and John, mention Peter and other disciples, other than aforementioned women, actually going to the tomb. Luke is the only gospel with our particular story today that occurs during the day of the first day of the week although there is potential reference to it in the 12 verses that scholars believe were added to the Gospel of Mark at a later date. Finally, only Luke and John contain stories about Jesus appearing one or more times to the disciples and the other followers in a room with locked doors. So you see, our story today occurs during the day of the first day of the week, **after** Jesus' resurrection and appearances to women at or near the tomb and **before** Jesus' appearance to the disciples and others on the **evening** of the first day. They returned from Emmaus to Jerusalem arriving after Jesus had appeared to the disciples and others minus Thomas. Now you know the rest of the story.

Today is the third of eight Sundays in the season of Easter and the ninth Sunday after Easter, technically fifty days, is Pentecost. I asked Copilot to tell me common themes in our four readings today. It gave me six themes with some explanations and a summary statement. I do not know if there was an intentional order in the way Copilot listed the themes, but they are: First, God's faithfulness and Salvation; second, Repentance and response; third, the role of the Holy Spirit; fourth, community and witness; fifth, transformation and new life; and finally sixth, hospitality and encounter.

In our first reading from Acts, Peter is preaching to Israelites about Jesus. Did you catch the Israelites response? **“What should we do?”** And, the most important part of Peter’s response is, **“Repent and be baptized.”** After we have repented and been baptized, Michael DeKraai in his God Pause Devotional on this reading says, *“All we can do is trust the words of the witnesses.”* I think that also means trusting in God’s love and promises and changing the focus of our lives from the worldly focus we grow up with to Jesus’ kingdom focus. Michael goes on to describe this kingdom focus as, *“Now, **we** are the presence of God in the world today. Our every word or deed speaks of that presence and our call to love our neighbor.”* Michael also has a similar thought in his devotional on our psalm when he says, *“When we see the world as God sees it, then we catch a glimpse of the kingdom of God. That makes heaven even closer than we think.”* The truth here is that *‘what should we do’* does not end with *‘repent and be baptized’* but rather it begins a change in us that allow us to follow in Jesus’ footsteps, to care for other human beings no matter what, or who, or even how marginalized they are by our society. Picture please Nels.



What caught your attention first? Anyone? Now – how did you react? I think this captures a bigger picture for us than we think. It is very often the marginalized of this world who rescue and care for those who marginalized them. Kind of weird, isn't it?

Have any of you seen the movie with Dennis Quaid - *The Day after Tomorrow*? It is about a climate change catastrophe in which US citizens are forced to seek shelter and support in third world countries that they had previously demeaned. We, all of us, are one bad health crisis, downturn in the economy, or major disaster from losing all that we have and being homeless on the streets, or marginalized, or exiled if you will. Sundays and Seasons had this to say about our second reading from First Peter, "*The imagery of exile is used to help readers of this letter understand that they are strangers in a strange land. Christians no longer belong to this age. Through the death of Christ we belong to God, so that our focus, faith, and hope are no longer on such things as silver or gold.*" This thought is echoed in the last verse of the reading that says, "**You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring Word of God.**" Do you believe this? Do you even understand what this means?

Yesterday, we celebrated and remembered Zel. It was a wonderful moving service but I did something intentionally in my homily that I wonder how many people there actually caught it. Every one of the many references I made to Zel's faith and to my faith were all presented in present tense. We live with one foot in the kingdom of God and one foot in the world, the question is, which foot do you, we lean on most.

Verse 31 of our gospel reading says, "**Their eyes were opened.**" Michael DeKraai said these words make him think about what opens his eyes to God's presence. What opens your eyes to God's presence? Michael goes on in his God Pause devotional on our gospel reading to describe the two walking on the road to Emmaus: "*All they could see was death. It took familiar action on the part of Jesus to help them see beyond themselves.*" Is all you see death? Why? What familiar action did Jesus do that opened their eyes? Jesus simply broke bread with them. Do you realize that we break bread with God and Jesus every Sunday, in fact, in almost every service we have. We just need to let our eyes be opened.

Hear then the good news:

I mentioned a Copilot summary earlier, so here it is: "*These texts together emphasize God's saving action, the call to repentance and faithful living, the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, the importance of community and witness, and the transformative encounter with Christ that shapes discipleship. They form a cohesive message of hope, obedience, and mission for the Christian life.*"

We live in both God's kingdom and the world now.

God's grace, love, and mercy sustains us as we live in the world.

In Jesus' resurrection, God shows us that death is not the end but the beginning of new life.

Greg Garret, an Episcopal priest, wrote this week: "*It is Easter, after all, when our risen Lord reminds us that we are called to live into reality that life can change, that hope has wings, that love is ascendant, and that we don't have to live in fear behind locked doors.*"

Grace and peace to you my friends, this week – accept change, give your hope wings, and love everyone and everything around, no matter what it costs **you**.

Amen