

4.18.21 Er3 Risen Christ on the Road with Us

- We were shocked earlier this week to hear that one person cut another person off on Route 61, and then things escalated – the one pulled his car across the highway in front of the other, then the other one got out of his car, and he was stabbed to death, and his body was left where it fell on the road
 - Road rage
 - I don't think anyone gets out of bed in the morning and thinks, "I'd better drive carefully today, because someone might stab me to death over a traffic disagreement."
- Two years ago, I don't think anyone of us got out of bed thinking, "I better enjoy these carefree days, because soon we might go through lockdowns, social distancing, and masking wearing, all because of a tiny virus – a virus so small that 100,000,000 can fit on the head of a pin
 - But what has until recently been unimaginable has happened in our lifetime
 - The coronavirus has forced us to change the way we live, including how we work, how we learn, how or even if we go out for groceries, how or if we eat at a restaurant, and even of course... if or how we gather for worship
 - Meanwhile, over 560,000 people in the United States have died, including members of our church and our families, and in addition, even more people have been terribly sick and have not fully recovered – again including people in both Jerusalem and among our families and friends
 - And the impact of all that is huge. This week I read that a counselor has estimated that each death and every traumatic illness, brings deep grief into the lives of an average of NINE people... and frankly I think that her estimate of nine people per death or severe illness is low
 - This is a nation, and more broadly throughout the world, a place where the survivors are grieving
- About 2000 years ago, none of the disciples woke up in the morning and thought, "I guess this is the day that we will scatter like terrified sheep just before Jesus will be crucified."
- And then several days later, none of the disciples woke up and got out of bed and thought, "I better check the tomb to see if Jesus has been raised from the dead."

- Even though Jesus had told his disciples that he was going to suffer, die, and be raised, none of them understood it
 - So Good Friday was a terrible shock!
 - And Easter morning was a wonderful surprise!
- Meanwhile, on Easter morning a follower of Jesus named Cleopas, together with another disciple whose name was not remembered, were walking down the road to Emmaus
 - A third person joined them, and their eyes were preventing from recognizing that it was Jesus Christ himself, raised from the dead
 - This apparent stranger asked them why they looked so sad, and they told him about Jesus' death, and the rumor – just a rumor from some women that Jesus had been raised
 - The stranger then shared some scripture with them, and since it was getting dark, Cleopas and the other disciple invited the stranger to stay the night with them before continuing their journey
 - That night while they were eating, the stranger took bread, blessed it, and broke it – and then, only then were their eyes opened to recognize that this stranger who had accompanied them on the way was none other than Jesus Christ himself
 - Jesus left them, and then the two disciples walked back to Jerusalem and told the other disciples that Jesus had appeared to them, and made himself known to them in the breaking of the bread
 - And then Jesus came and appeared among this larger gathering and he was real – he was not a ghost, not figment of their imagination, and not a hologram
 - Finally the risen Christ opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and then he said, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. YOU are witnesses of these things. [Luke 24:46-48]”

- Not many people get out of bed in the morning and think, “Jesus the Risen Christ is going to walk with me today” – but maybe WE should think that every day
 - In a world where random violence can take place not just in big cities that we think are so dangerous, but can also take place just as easily in small towns – in a world of random violence and blind rage, our eyes may not see or recognize Jesus, but God through the Holy Spirit that has been calling us to faith and grooming us each day to be witnesses and servants of Jesus Christ crucified and raised – God through the Holy Spirit walks with us in life
 - In a world where a microscopic virus can mutate and spread illness and death around the world, bringing grief and fear to all of us, we need to know that the Spirit of the Risen Christ has promised never to abandon us – because after all, that IS part of the Easter promise!
 - And not only do WE need this comfort and assurance, but so does the rest of the world
 - So when we get out of bed tomorrow morning, we will not know what will happen to us that day
 - But we DO know through eyes opened by the breaking of the bread and the opening of the scriptures, that the Spirit of the Risen Christ which has called us to faith, will be our unseen companion on our way each and every day