

4.26.20 Er3 The Risen Lord Walks with Us Even Now [Luke 24:13-35]

- These days are filled with challenges
 - For some of us, these days seem like they have been pulled from the movie “Groundhog Day” – so many of our days are blurring and seem to repeat, just one after the other because we are confined to our homes and one day often looks just like the last one
 - These days for some of us, are a nerve-wracking time – going to work in healthcare, or working in vital industries, or facing the mask-wearing public from behind hastily installed plexiglass shields, and hoping that you don’t become another viral statistic
 - These days are lonely, because there are only so many re-runs that you can watch on TV
 - These days are stressful for some, as family tension or abuse, or personal depression or anxiety rises in close quarters
 - These days are painful as businesses fail, and income falls through unemployment
 - These days are strange, as students huddle at computers, trying to grasp what teachers are explaining without the benefit of a classroom or human contact, and meanwhile our young people are missing both their friends, and many milestones in sports, music, drama, social events, and even graduation
 - These days are forcing us to learn to work from home with video conferences and cloud meetings, instead of face-to-face interaction
 - These days are a time of conflict with some people loudly rebelling against recommended health practices to prevent the spread of disease
 - And of course, these days Sunday worship means to sing our songs alone, to pray by ourselves or with our household instead of with our whole church family, to listen to the public reading and interpretation of the scriptures apart from one another, to not being able to share the peace during worship or coffee afterwards with one another, and of course to not being able to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion as part of a community of faith deeply rooted in Word and Sacrament

- These days are unlike anything that any of us have ever lived through, but in the midst of our daily dislocation and disorientation, today's gospel takes us to a very different place and time
- Today's gospel takes us to a pleasant scene with two disciples walking down a road, and inviting a stranger to walk along the way with them
 - Right now, that is NOT the world that we live in, but let us use our imagination, and let us dream of a time not TOO much longer in the future, when we once again can walk together, and welcome strangers without fear, without social distancing, and without facemasks
 - Of course in the gospel story, the stranger whom the two disciples welcomed was none-other than Jesus, the Risen Christ whose identity was concealed from them
 - Now the two were sad, because in the last three days they had had their hopes crushed – they had had their hopes crushed when this Jesus of Nazareth to whom they had looked with fond hope, had been condemned to death and brutally crucified
 - Their sadness was not dispelled by the rumor that several women whom they knew had found that Jesus' tomb was empty, and that then angels had told them that Jesus was alive
 - So as these two walked along the road together with Jesus, he interpreted and taught the scriptures to them
 - When evening came, the two invited Jesus to stay with them instead moving on, and when it came time for dinner, Jesus “took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.”
- Now here's the thing – even when so many of us are largely confined to our homes and we cannot go out for walk together – even without walking together, we are still on a journey in our lives, and even in this new viral world Jesus the risen Christ still walks with us
 - Our journey even without walking together, our journey even without leaving the house, our journey consists in living with faith and hope even in these most difficult and unusual days

- As many of you know, outside Jerusalem's building there is a labyrinth painted on the pavement inside the covered walkway in front of the church
- Now labyrinths pre-date Christianity, but especially in the medieval church, Christians adopted labyrinths because although they did not have a Christian origin, labyrinths DID give people a way to walk and pray without leaving the building or the churchyard
- In that time when a few people were able to make prayerful pilgrimages to either Jerusalem or Rome, most of the people could not – so a labyrinth gave everybody the opportunity to walk and pray without having to leave family or village or job.
- And now in this day, so many of us cannot leave family, or neighborhood, or job either, BUT we can still walk and pray
- So of course now in these days of social distancing you are welcome during this pandemic to go to our labyrinth, and walk it and pray through it either alone or masked and at a distance
- Or you can walk around your neighborhood alone or a distance, and pray while you walk
- Or you can work around your house, and pray, reflect on scripture, and even perhaps sing your favorite Easter hymn
- But wherever we walk, even in these most difficult and unusual days, the gospel reading for today reminds us that we never walk alone.
- Unrecognized, unseen, and very often not even felt, the crucified and risen Christ through the gift of the Holy Spirit poured out on us in Holy Baptism, and that Spirit promised to us as an advocate who calls forth faith and hope even in sad hearts – this Spirit of the Risen Lord made known in both the scriptures and in the Lord's Supper that we have received in days past – this Spirit of the Risen Christ accompanies us as even now, we continue to journey through these most unusual days of our lives.