

Easter 3—Year A  
Acts 2:14a, 36-41  
Psalm 116:1-3, 10-17  
1 Peter 1:17-23  
Luke 24:13-35

There are so many phrases in scripture that leap out in this new world we're living in. **Acts** gives us the notion of **hearing things that cut us to the heart**—*roger that*.

**I Peter** admonishes us—**live in reverent fear during the time of your exile**. *Not fear like be really scared*, but in this time of **Stay at Home exile**, have a **good healthy dose of reverence for this virus** and the **sacrifice being asked of you**.

**I Peter** goes on—you were **ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ**. *I don't normally talk* about being **ransomed with the precious blood**—that sends me down a *substitutionary atonement rabbit hole*—but **today, it lands**. *Please*, let's not **ransom one another with silver and gold**. And **what are the futile ways inherited from our ancestors**; are they **too many** to number? The notion that **I am able to act in isolation** and that **what I do really doesn't impact you** and *vice versa*? The notion that **the hand can say to the foot, I have no need of you**? Might *these* be **futile ways that we've inherited**? Could we **hold fast** to the notion that **Christ, in his body, in his blood, in his whole being, shattered that isolation by holding the whole world**, in all its glory and goodness *and* in all its injustice and devastation, that **Christ held all of this in his outstretched arms**, declaring that **nothing is outside of the reach of his love**? In the **middle of this crisis**, can we see how **Christ's willingness to die and take all these futile ways to the grave sets us free** to live and walk in a different way?

Oh, it's **hard to trust** in these times, but **I Peter** reminds us that **through Christ**, by *keeping our eye on him*, by *keeping our eye trained on his rhythm of death and resurrection*, we **can trust in God to bring us through all of this**.

There is no question that **this experience is purifying us**, often in ways we wish it weren't—lifting up the **obedience to the truth that we must have** if we are to come through this as a society is a **good and necessary thing**, as is **calling us to have genuine mutual love**—*we are in this together*. To **love one another deeply from the heart** has never felt more important. **These times are asking a deeper love of us**, a love intimately tied to **decisions and actions and matters of the will**, and *not* just the **fleeting love of our affections and feelings**. A love borne of **sacrificial acts that are manifested in a multitude of ways, large and small**. “**You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God**,” **I Peter** says. *Might this be?* Is it possible that **all of us are being born anew**? Is it possible that **our world is being born anew**, drawing strength from a source that **transcends how society has normally defined “the good life,” and instead, letting our roots spread from the source of life and love and compassion and connection that is growing among us?**

Who knew **I Peter** had so much to say! Week after week, our **scriptures** are just **waiting to reveal treasures to us** that, *until now*, **have been hidden from our eyes**.

And *this morning*, **having our eyes opened** is the name of the game. The **Collect** prays: **Open the eyes of our faith, that we may behold him in all his redeeming work**. *Right now*, where is **Christ in action redeeming things that, frankly, seem beyond redemption?**

And then we have **the road to Emmaus**—what a great story for our time! We're **back to that first day of the week**, and **two of Jesus' disciples are walking along, talking about everything that's been happening.**

**Jesus himself comes near and walks with them, but their eyes are kept from recognizing him. He asks them what they're discussing while they walk along.**

That's like a *mic drop moment* for the **two disciples. They stopped in their tracks, looking so sad, then Cleopas got the words out, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?"** It'd be like someone *dropping in on our conversations right now asking why we're looking sad and wondering why all we talk about is this virus.*

**Jesus responded, "What things?"**

Now, *obviously, Jesus knows what things, so why ask?* Because *he knows we need to tell the story, every detail, every piece, because in trauma, you have to tell the story, or it eats at you from the inside out. You've got to get the squirrelly thoughts, and the what if's, and the recriminations out; you've got to get the fixing blame thoughts off the repeat loop in your head, OR you can't recognize any other possibility.*

*And so, the two disciples go through the whole story, the whole narrative, as they have constructed it. And when they were done, even ending with that unreal tale about how the women had reported that Jesus was alive and how others had found the tomb empty just as the women had said, when they had gotten the whole story out, the Jesus said, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?"*

And *then, he went back through the story and reinterpreted the whole narrative showing them a different way in, a different way to make sense of things.*

Well, it was **getting on toward evening**, and it was **time to stop for the night. Jesus was going to keep on walking, but the two disciples urged him to stay. He did.** And when he was at the table with them, **he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.**

*The guest becomes the host.*

**Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. And then, the scales fell from their minds and their hearts and their spirits; then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"**

The **recognition event** happened when Jesus took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. It took them back to *other times* when Jesus had taken bread, blessed and broken it, and given it out, *especially at that supper they shared the night before he died. One moment of recognition in one place helped them to recognize him in all places, most especially in the place that mattered the most—their hearts.* The thing about **recognition events** is that **they can happen anywhere.** Yes, the *one this story lifts up*, and the *one we have staked our lives on for 2,000 years* is in **the breaking of the bread, the Eucharist**, but **just now, we can't experience that breaking of the bread.** But today's story *also helps us remember that their hearts burned as the stranger talked with them on the road and opened up*

the scriptures, opened up *all* the stories, *expanded* their capacity to see *all* the times and ways he had been with them. And that's our way in *right now*.

Coronavirus is **THE THING** that we are talking about with one another, and a lot of us are looking sad on *any given day*. What we are walking through is hard.

Jesus has come near to us and is walking with us as we travel this road. He gives us the chance to tell the story we need to tell about these days, and *then* he calls us on our *foolishness* in thinking there's *only one* narrative here. He calls us on how *slow our hearts* are when it comes to trusting.

And then he helps us turn that narrative on its head pointing out *all* the places where he is present and active.

And when we still can't see him, something will break open right before our eyes that catches our full attention, and his presence will be undeniable—maybe it's some act of unexpected kindness, maybe it's some act of sacrifice, maybe it's in a laugh or a moment of beauty or in a felt sense that you are not alone, maybe it's in a hard truth that you have the capacity to hear—it will come in *all* kinds of ways, and *in that moment*, your eyes will be opened and you will recognize that Jesus has been there all along; *his fingerprints are everywhere*; that one moment of recognition *changes everything*; that one moment of recognition is how we, and the world, *are being born anew*.

So, yes, tell the story as you need to, tell it with all the detail necessary to acknowledge the trauma, *but then, don't cling to the narrative*. Jesus is walking with you, and he wants to show you *all* the places where he lives in the narrative. Stay present to *all* the life around you, *and even to the death*; *in a moment that will catch you by surprise*, you will recognize him, and *once* you see him, he'll start showing up *everywhere*; you'll see him in your rearview mirror and on the road ahead. Our hearts may be slow, but they'll catch on, and *then*, we'll know how to break bread and enjoy communion in ways we never dreamed possible. Amen.

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