

Order of Worship
Third Sunday of Easter
April 26, 2020

(Read the prayers and scripture readings and recite the Creed aloud, even if you are by yourself, in order to hear with the ears each one.)

Prepare for worship: Sit in silence or with soft music for a few moments

Call to Worship:

Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim
Till all the world adore his sacred name.

Opening Prayer:

Eternal God, we are here, yearning to know you more fully. Stay with us as we worship this day. Reveal yourself in the words that are spoken, the songs that are sung and the music that is played. Help us to understand your truth, and embrace your life-giving power, revealed within your enduring word. In Christ's Holy name we pray. Amen

Affirmation of Faith Apostle's Creed

Prayer:

Holy One, we long to recognize your presence, but the journey can be confusing. In the midst of our confusion, reveal yourself with grace and love. We yearn to hear your voice, but noisy distractions surround us daily. Cut through the distractions that overwhelm us, and bring us to the clarity of your wisdom. We desire to touch the living water of your mercy and forgiveness. Grant us this life-giving water and the power of your enduring word that we may know your forgiveness each and every day. In the name of the risen Christ who taught us to pray.

The Lord's Prayer

Prayer of Illumination:

Open our ears that we may hear, and our hearts and minds that we may receive your word
O Lord our rock and redeemer.

(After each reading take two to three minutes to reflect upon the meaning of the passage to you today.)

New Testament Reading Acts 2: 14a, 36-41

Psalm 116: 1-4, 12-19

Epistle Reading 1 Peter 1: 17-23

Special Music

Gospel Reading Luke 24: 13-35

Sermon How Do We Recognize Jesus?

Benediction:

We have invited Jesus to remain to be the host of our lives and he has been revealed to us. Let us run out to tell others so that all may see the risen Jesus that gives life. Amen

Response: *God Be With You till We Meet Again*

God be with you till we meet again;
by his counsels guide, uphold you,
with his sheep securely fold you;
God be with you till we meet again.

How Do We Recognize Jesus?

April 26, 2020

Luke 24: 13-35

This story of Jesus' appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is probably the most familiar post resurrection story in the Gospels. This is the first post resurrection appearance of Jesus in the gospel of Luke. But there seems to be some oddities in this story, the main one being that the disciples did not recognize Jesus. Don't you find that a little odd?

Even though it is not explicitly stated one would assume that these two had been following Jesus for some time. (We tend to forget that there were more than just twelve disciples of Jesus.) They probably followed Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem. They had probably heard many of Jesus' teaching. They probably saw many of his miracles. Who knows, they might have heard about Jesus and went in search of him, followed him but now were heading back to their home village, Emmaus. All they had searched and hoped for dashed and now they were heading home.

They were heading home when Jesus suddenly appears and walks with them. There is no flash of lightning or clap of thunder, but Jesus simply catches up and walks with them. It is clearly stated that it is Jesus himself that came near and walked with them. But yet they did not recognize Jesus.

Perhaps it is that they were thinking of the crucified Jesus. They were thinking of the Jesus that they thought would be the one to redeem Israel. When they thought of Jesus, they saw the Jesus who had taught and performed miracles. They saw the Jesus who ate with tax collectors and sinners. They saw the Jesus who was betrayed by one of his own disciples. They saw the Jesus who was arrested, "tried", and found guilty. They saw (or knew of) the Jesus who had been beaten, mocked and crucified. They saw, (knew) the Jesus who had been laid in the tomb. This was the Jesus they knew. This was the Jesus they would have recognized.

But this was the resurrected Jesus, not the crucified Jesus. This was the Jesus that had defeated the forces of death and sin and had risen from the grave. This was the Jesus that was not bloodied and beaten but the Jesus that was in the fullness

of the glory. This was the Jesus that was the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation and new life, eternal life.

While we may shake our heads and wonder how it is possible that these two disciples did not recognize Jesus, we must confess that there are times when we did not recognize Jesus, when Jesus did not appear to us as we expected. And it is easy not to recognize someone when they do not appear as you expect.

The Christmas after Kay began her chemo treatment, she had reached the hair falling out stage. She had hats and had ordered a wig which came right before Christmas. She had put it on briefly when she got it, but had not worn it for any length of time. Paul and Sheila Rogers had asked me to assist in serving at one of the Christmas Eve Communion Services. I had gone on to the church and Kay was going to come later. As I looked out over the congregation, I did not see Kay but I did wonder who the woman was sitting with I.D. and Mary Gale Hook. She came up with them and when I served her, she gave me a huge smile. After the service someone asked how Kay was doing. I started to say something when someone said well there she is. Kay was the woman sitting with I.D. and Mary Gale but I did not recognize her for she was wearing the wig. She did not look as I expected her to look.

Often Jesus does not appear to us as we may expect. We may expect a white glowing saintly look. Maybe white clothes and a beatific smile, beaming down saying, yes, my child, what may I do for you? But Jesus may be the street person who guides the distraught young woman who has been wandering the streets of a strange city back safely to her car. Jesus may be someone who unexpectedly just pops into your life.

Our friend, one of our Sunday School teachers at Mt Hebron, was going through a hard time in his life. He was going through a divorce with two small children, custody battles and all that goes along with that. He would drive the bus to pick up those from Agape Sr. Care to bring them to church. One Sunday, with the usual contingent of white ladies, a young African-American man got on the bus to come to church. The young man suffered from schizophrenia and had been placed at Agape by the VA as he was unable to live completely independently due to his mental illness. The young man told our friend that he wanted to come to Sunday school, so he started picking the young man up every Sunday and bringing him to

our Sunday School class. During this time these two developed a close friendship. Our very conservative white friend and this young African American suffering from mental illness were a very unlikely pair. Our friend confessed that he could not have gotten through this time in his life without this young African American Jesus. No, Jesus does not appear to us in the way that we would expect and therefore recognize.

So how do we recognize Jesus? How do we know when Jesus walks with us. The story gives us some clues as to how we can recognize Jesus.

As they walked, Jesus interpreted all that the scriptures had said about him. Jesus was giving them the knowledge about him, but yet they still did not recognize him. This goes to show that we cannot recognize Jesus just by knowing about Jesus. There is a huge difference between knowing about someone and knowing someone. We cannot recognize Jesus simply on an intellectual level. We must go deeper.

Once the disciples got home to Emmaus, Jesus appeared to be going further. But the disciples invited Jesus to come and stay the night with them. They urged Jesus to stay with them. They demonstrated hospitality. They invited this stranger to come into their home, to eat with them and spend the night with them. They invited Jesus in.

Then, as they came to the table, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Jesus took the role of the host, for the breaking and distributing the food would be the role of the host, not the guest. Jesus became not the guest but the host. At that point they recognized him, and he vanished. They knew, even though he was gone from their sight, that Jesus had been with them.

They recognized that Jesus had been with them, as they invited Jesus to stay with them, and Jesus became the host of the meal. This would have brought back to their mind the last meal they had with Jesus before the crucifixion. As Jesus was invited into their home and became the host in their home, they were able to recognize Jesus. Not the crucified Jesus, but the risen Jesus, the living Jesus.

We recognize Jesus as we invite Jesus to stay with us. The word translated as stay has the deeper connotation of to remain, abide or dwell. We invite Jesus to

remain and abide with us. But it is not as we invite Jesus to stay with us as a guest that we are able to recognize Jesus, it is as Jesus becomes the host of our lives.

It is as Jesus becomes the host that takes the bread, blesses and breaks it, and gives it to us that we recognize Jesus. It is as Jesus becomes the host that nourishes and sustains us. When we invite Jesus to stay with us, not as a guest in our lives but as the host of our lives, we can see Jesus.

The disciples were able to see in retrospect, “were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” After they invited Jesus to stay with them and he became their host, they recognized that Jesus had been with them. Then when they ran back to Jerusalem and told the others, Jesus came to be with them.

It may be in retrospect that we can recognize Jesus in our lives, but as we invite him to stay with us, to remain with us, not as a guest but as the host, sustaining and nurturing, we can recognize Jesus with us in our past, our present and our future.