

The Rev. Dr. David K. McIntosh
April 19, 2026- 3rd Sunday of Easter (A)
Christ Church Quaker Farms, Oxford, CT

Psalm 116:1-3, 10-17; 1 Peter 1:17-23; **Luke 24:13-35**

**“Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes
were kept from recognizing him.” †**

Each of us has been on the road to Emmaus... All of us have travelled that road, though we may never have physically been to the Holy Land or visited that place some 7 miles outside of Jerusalem. Still, each of us has travelled that very road those disciples travelled in the Gospel story today. Consider the many times we have been deeply involved in our own thoughts and activities, distracted by fear, worry or even excitement. The times we've been so self-absorbed that we could notice little else around us. And consider the fact that we may have met Jesus but didn't realize it.

Three weeks after Easter is a good time to consider how similar our lives might be to those of Jesus' disciples. Especially in our present circumstances of social upheaval and conflict everywhere. Sometimes it seems *that all that once mattered* has vanished and the world has been turned upside down. Many of us feel emotionally, spiritually, and physically devastated and abandoned.

I've felt that way recently, often almost overwhelmed. In my prayer time this week, I remembered an experience from long ago, shortly after graduating from college in NC, when I was a seminarian in residence in a church in Fayetteville, a large military town hosting the largest Army and Air Force bases in the US. I lived with the priests in the rectory, which was directly adjacent to the church building, encouraging people in need to visit. We had this obnoxious doorbell, whenever it rang the buzz made the whole house shake. The rector was a former Benedictine monk, who insisted that one of us must always be around— 'in case Jesus came by.' It was interesting to me that he was often away playing golf or at some country club having dinner with parishioners, and 'one of us needed to be around.'

Anyway, on one such evening, one of the priests and I, were resting in our rooms after a busy Easter Sunday of many services. I was exhausted, as the seminarian I did all the set-up and take down and preparation and planning. There was no liturgy committee, no Altar Guild, just me. I was considering how well I would sleep that evening when the doorbell rang. So loud, I jumped. 'Don't worry, Father... I'll get it,' I said as I prepared to venture downstairs. Instead, he beat me to the door and indeed, there was someone in need... I was still upstairs trying to get my shoes on when the priest met me in the hallway. I asked, 'Well, who is it?' He replied, 'It's Jesus.... And he's drunk!' When I got downstairs, sure enough, there in our living room was Jesus, 'three sheets to the wind!'

We spent the next few hours listening to the man who had come to us and helped to get him stable, cleaned up and bedded down in a hotel for the night. I can still remember the atmosphere... the scents, the sound of that man's soft voice coming from a haggard face, and the look of gratefulness in his beautiful eyes, as he told me (in difficult to understand slurred

speech) of his former career and of his lost love. When we finally returned home, we were met by the Rector. I must have looked as if I had been out on the town myself and probably smelled that way too. Just as he was starting to make a comment, I exclaimed, “You know, you were right, Father... Jesus did drop by tonight!” Then I just went to bed, leaving him confused.

Jesus often comes to us at unexpected times, and as someone who is unimpressive, perhaps even unsightly, unkempt, and smelly. He comes often as someone in need, or with a different perspective than our own.

The Greek text of Luke’s Gospel is interesting, because that word translated as ‘stranger’ – **paroikeis, παροικεῖς** – really means ‘foreigner’ or even more accurately, a resident visitor from elsewhere, ‘a migrant.’ And it is striking that they were discussing such potentially dangerous things. Luke constructed that story to respond to the hopes that the coming of the Messiah would lead to the reestablishment of the Davidic kingdom; it’s pretty clear it wasn’t meant to be a verbatim report. Nevertheless, the conversation Luke provides would have been risky, even foolhardy, for those fleeing after the execution of their leader. Jesus engages in this risky conversation, walking with those who dare to speak openly of their political and religious concerns. When I prayed about how risky this conversation on the road to Emmaus was, it made we wonder if today we should be engaging in similar risky conversations?

Going back to the text, we just heard in the passage “their eyes were kept from recognizing him.” The Greek here implies that their eyes were not *strong enough* to grasp everything they saw. They were *preoccupied*... they were caught up in the human condition. We are *all* often preoccupied, self-involved, too busy with the hustle & bustle of our lives to recognize God when he comes to us, mainly because it’s unexpected. We all of us walk that road to Emmaus...

We each have our own notion of how God should appear, how God should act. We move through life with ordered, organized patterns, and following our own agendas, until a stranger comes and turns our ideas upside down and challenges us. The stranger least expected— sometimes unsightly, unwanted, someone we might never associate with— a liberal... a conservative... someone gay... someone of a different race... a democrat... a republican... someone rich... someone who is poor... or maybe someone who is not even a legal resident. After all, God would *never* come in such a form, God would never speak through such a person! Think of the times you may have encountered the risen Lord, but your eyes were not able to recognize him... We’ve all walked that road to Emmaus.

As Christ’s Church, our mission is to share God’s love & compassion with the world around us. And that starts with recognizing that Jesus is *always present* with us, *even when we fail to recognize him*. Let’s be open to Jesus’ presence and know that if we ask him to ‘stay with us,’ as the disciples did, he will!

Jesus reassures us that he is here with us *even now*, despite the many hardships, struggles, and fears we face, despite the turmoil in the world around us, and he **will** be made known to us in unexpected ways, and always in the breaking of the bread! †