

Worship Service “An Ordinary World”

Easter 3, Year A

23rd April, 2023

Psalm 116 NRSV / Luke 24:13-35 NRSV

Prelude

Opening Music (Video)

[Ordinary](#)

Hannah Kerr

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Welcoming/Announcements

Pass the Peace

Hymn *There is a Place of Quiet Rest*

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Call to Worship

Easter is not an event that has occurred it's an adventure that has begun not a place that we have visited but a path on which we stand

a story not complete, but unfolding characters still breathing stations still teeming with the promise of new life not just for you and me but for all people, in all places a cosmic crux a turning point of time

Easter is the season of wild hope of dangerous intent of potent promise where the future flaps unfurled in the spirit's breeze where hopes bubble with uncorked effervescence where toes tap to free-form rhythms where rainbow hues splash empty canvas

Today we continue the journey we re-enter the story to explore our questions to uncover our doubts to face our nagging need

We walk the path of two who traveled a dusty road wrapped in confusion and despair two who shared the company of a stranger voicing their pain airing their fears and in the listening heard words of hope and promise and in the eating received true bread of life

Today we re-enter the story with expectation that Christ will also reveal himself to us in sights and sounds in words and symbols.

Invocation

Risen Christ walk with us this day, be our companion and guide, be our teacher and friend, be our host and servant bringing your gifts of faith, peace and hope and deep joy as always, Amen.

Psalm of the Day (Lyric Video) [Psalm 116](#) NRSV Sons of Korah,

uploaded to YouTube by Ed Sullivan, visit <https://sonsofkorah.com/> to support this artist.

I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my supplications.

Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.

The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish.

Then I called on the name of the LORD: 'O LORD, I pray, save my life!'

Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; our God is merciful.

The LORD protects the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me.

Return, O my soul, to your rest, for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.

For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.

I walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

I kept my faith, even when I said, 'I am greatly afflicted';

I said in my consternation, 'Everyone is a liar.' What shall I return to the LORD for all his bounty to me?

I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD,

I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.

Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful ones.

O LORD, I am your servant; I am your servant, the child of your serving-maid. You have loosed my bonds.

I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice and call on the name of the LORD.

I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people,

in the courts of the house of the LORD, in your midst, O Jerusalem.

Praise the LORD!

A Time of Prayer

Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

Faithful God, In these early days after the resurrection, we wonder what it all means. We can relate to the women who fled the tomb with terror and amazement. We understand Thomas and his need for proof that would come only by touching the wounds and seeing the nail marks. We understand the fear and confusion that kept the disciples in the shadow cast by closed doors.

We also keep company with the travelers on the Emmaus road who felt the strange burning of the truth and hope and love weaving into the sadness that consumed them on their walk.

We find ourselves in the eternal movement between fear and faith, doubt and conviction, wonder and worry, and we trust that you are present with us, O God. We trust that like the disciples we will be able to stand and tell the whole message about this life that:

Love is stronger than hate. Life has the final word over death Beyond what we can see with our eyes, there is a bond of humanness that draws and keeps us together.

Loving God, It is a complicated and frightening world in which we live If we are ill, strengthen us. If we are tired, fortify our spirits. If we are anxious, help us to consider the lilies of the field and the birds of the air.

Help us not to stockpile treasures in our larders, when many lack what they need. Don't let fear cause us to overlook the needs of others more vulnerable than ourselves. Fix our eyes on your story and our hearts on your grace.

Help us always to hold fast to the good, See the good in others, And remember there is just one world, one hope, One everlasting love, with baskets of bread for everyone.

In Jesus we make our prayer, The one who suffered, died and was raised to new life, In whom we trust these days and all days, Amen.

Hymn *A Charge to Keep I Have* 393

Gospel Reading Luke 24:13-35 NRSV

And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad.

Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?'

He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him.'

But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place.

Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning,

and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive.

Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.'

Then he said to them, '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?'

Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on.

But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he 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.

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?'

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together.

They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!'

Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Message

An Ordinary World

I think we all know what it's like to feel lost. That sense of being disoriented, of not knowing which way to turn. Certainly that feeling is pronounced when we are physically lost, in unfamiliar terrain and not knowing what the right path is that will lead us back to the familiar. But more often, I think we are familiar with the sense of feeling lost when our expectations are not met, when things don't turn out at all like we anticipated. There's a sense of "what now?" "Where do I go from here?" Often when we encounter such disappointment and bewilderment, we fall back into our regular routine, that same-old, same-old day-to-day grind. While we often find little hope in that monotony, there is a sense of security to be found there. Our expectations, such as they are, are met in the daily routine. Rarely does something happen that disrupts going to work, paying our bills and taxes, preparing our meals, etc. But rarely are we inspired by the ordinary events of our lives either.

That is where we find these disciples of Christ in our gospel story today. They had been all hyped up for a big change in their lives. They had invested a lot of their energy and hope in the promise of renewal and change that this phenomenal prophet Jesus had presented, only to apparently have it all crash down around them with his arrest and execution. Everything they had built their hopes on seemed gone. They were despondent, and chose the course most of us would choose. They apparently were on the road home. Back to the life they had known before following Jesus: back to the same old routine, the same old job, the same old being oppressed. They were visibly resigned, commiserating with each other about how it had all gone wrong.

Then in the midst of their despair, they encounter a stranger on the road; who asks what they're talking about. Amazed at his ignorance, they give him the short version of what has gone so terribly wrong. Yet he doesn't just take their disappointment at face value and offer his sympathies. He systematically explains to them that their impression of events wasn't the depressing reality that they had interpreted it to be. He explains to them why things had to be the way they played out, showing them how the game plan was laid out all along in the scriptures. He then goes to take his leave, triggering them to invite him to continue on with them and dine together, to keep the conversation going. Yet it is in the most routine gesture of blessing the bread before the meal, that their eyes are finally opened. Here is the man whose loss they have been grieving. Here was the hope they thought was lost for good.

Suddenly they realized that there still was promise. They understood the real hope of what all those tragic events of the last several days meant. And just as quickly, this divine presence was gone. Yet they didn't fall back into despair. Instead they turned around and ran seven miles back to Jerusalem to share the news. positive, only to have it not pan out, and find ourselves left with disappointment. It could be that job we had such a great interview for, only to get the rejection email. It could be that school we really wanted to get into, only to find out we didn't make it.

There are countless events in life that we plan for, put our hopes in, only to face disappointment. As a congregation, we can really identify with this situation. Three years ago, we could not have imagined how much our reality would change seemingly overnight. While we weren't a big group, we still had most of our active church family with us each week, and were working to make our ordinary life together work. Yet in a blink of an eye, we weren't seeing each other in person at all. Our gatherings became virtual, and some of the more vulnerable among us either became unable to, or chose not to, return in person with us, leaving us a shadow of our former selves. We returned from quarantine to face our own new reality, one that didn't match the hopes and dreams we had before.

How do we function in this new reality? I think we can really understand where these two disciples found themselves in today's story. We know what it means to have the rug pulled out from under us, and have only the most basic routines of our lives to look forward to.

The question is, where do we find the extraordinary in the ordinary? How can we find Jesus when he seems so lost from this world right now? Maybe our problem is like that of the disciples in our story. We are looking for Jesus in the wrong place, where our expectations lead, not where he actually is. Maybe we are on our own road to Emmaus right now. We too are on a journey of uncertainty. The question we need to ask ourselves is, where will we find Jesus in this journey? Maybe we, like the disciples, are expecting to find him in the wrong places and circumstances. It might be that it's not the church building that's as important, as the relationships with the people that we meet there. Maybe it's not the old hymns and familiar liturgy that are as important as the communal sharing together in our journeys of faith. I think we're finding the importance of those connections with each other, not dependent on a particular building in a particular location. Instead of always looking for Jesus in the sacred spaces we're used to, we just might learn we can find Jesus in those ordinary spaces around us: that person we chat with in the grocery store, the person walking their dog in our neighborhood, that old friend on the other end of the telephone, in the common room of a retirement community we know and love. We can see Jesus at work in those ordinary interactions all around us in our ordinary lives. On this Earth Day weekend, one can see evidence of the Divine by just looking out the window at creation fully in bloom. If we truly look, we can see Jesus at work all around us, in places we would have overlooked before in our normal rush, with the expectations of our old "normal." But our scripture story doesn't end in finding Jesus in the ordinary. It ends in them rushing to witness to that experience. So how do we as modern disciples, witness to Jesus in our ordinary world.

How can we be the face of Jesus that people recognize in our ordinary selves? Certainly we can model the simple fellowship of Jesus. We can connect and lift the spirits of those feeling isolated and alone. We can support the efforts of all those ordinary people in ordinary occupations that are so important to maintaining our everyday lives. We can be the blessed community we are called to, one that doesn't depend on buildings or rituals but one of honest, real connections. One that meets people where they are and shows compassion

and caring, one that shares our real selves with each other. One that looks out, not in. One that shines the true face of Jesus without concealment. We have a rare opportunity now to explore what being the body of Christ really means, outside of the old trappings we have grown accustomed to. The question is, will we choose to seek new ways of being ordinary, or will we continue to seek the normal of the past? Are we willing to continue to explore the possibilities of this new path that we've found ourselves on, and make this a time of learning what can be possible? As we journey together to Emmaus,

I hope and pray that we seek to find our savior where we are, in the ordinary around us, and break the bread of life with all those we encounter, as God's extraordinary community here and now. Amen.

Call to Serve

The author of 1 Peter implores us to love one another deeply *from the heart*, and assures us that we have been born anew *through the living and enduring word of God*.

In our call to serve today, let us consider how we might give, not out of obligation, but *from the heart*. Let our gifts be seeds of *the living and enduring word of God*, that will sprout in abundance of justice and hope all that is necessary for life, for sisters and brothers here at hand, and around the world.

A Time for Reflection

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

Gracious God, Like the disciples at Emmaus, we offer what we have. They offered their company, their table, their bread. We invite you to be with us, Jesus, as we offer you our love, our devotion, these gifts. May our eyes be opened to your holy presence among us, now and always. Amen.

Hymn *Christian, Let Your Burning Light* **402**

Benediction

In the times we think we are most alone, Christ is with us. When we are most distraught, Christ is beside us. When we are grieving, Christ is silently listening. When we rejoice, Christ is celebrating with us. Know that you are never truly alone. Know that you are always loved. Know that the hairs on your head are accounted for. You are God's beloved. Live with the assurance of God's steadfast love, now and always. Amen.

Postlude