



In Case You Missed Easter

Luke 24:13-15

13 Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened. 15 So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.

It would have been easy to miss Easter this year. To me, it felt like the Christmas Day I was on call at the hospital; Just not the same. I remember Easter Sundays with sunrise services, followed by breakfast casseroles (the United Methodist Men sponsored it and United Methodist Women cooked it—we are probably lucky it wasn't the other way around), and after that were two services. And if a family invited me over for Easter lunch, I was lucky if my head didn't fall into the lamb chops before dessert. Some may feel like the character in one of Nikos Kazantzakis' novels who said, "God forgive me . . . this year . . . I have not felt Christ rise."

The fact is many of us miss Easter from time to time. It's a great day to play golf if there isn't a tornado in the forecast. As a child, my family always went to the beach with Mom leading the spiritual way by getting up for sunrise service while the Easter Bunny brought me a basket of "not Hersheys" chocolate. Jesus rose while we children and men snored.

But even the “Christmas and Easter only” crowd couldn’t go to church this week; We pastors affectionately call them “Christers.” So, that was a vacuum too.

What happens when what we are used to becomes something else? I would have loved to have prepared something resembling lamb with mint sauce, but the store was out of lamb, so I made frozen Costco hamburgers. And the Easter basket? The grocery store was out of all the good stuff, leaving only the strange flavored Cadbury Eggs at 25% off. But they did have toilet paper so there’s that.

If you too felt a little off kilter this Easter, you are in good company. The fact is we don’t always feel like a party. For every excited person, there will be someone struggling with depression and anxiety. I can’t sing “Joy to the World” every second of the Christmas season. We just have to be where we are when we are there, one day at a time. Even Doubting Thomas missed the first Easter. Most of the population of Jerusalem did as well.

Speaking of expectations, none of the Easter appearances were grandiose. Outside of an earthquake, we don’t even have a ‘blinded by the light with the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus’ moment. Jesus was mistaken for the gardener for heaven’s sake. He showed up on a dusty road to Emmaus just to be with two grief-worn disciples (crisis can tire us out physically as well as spiritually). Jesus walked along a lakeshore waving to his disciples as they fished. But he was where he needed to be, at the right time in the right place. In other words, Jesus met his friends where they were in whatever stage of quarantine they found themselves. Jesus showed up when his friends weren’t even looking for him!

These resurrection appearances show us that Christ’s capacity to understand us is beyond our comprehension. He inspires glorious visions of beauty and salvation while he ministers to those with shattered lives and hearts. He is the Prince of Peace, but he isn’t afraid to walk into conflict and violence. The One who taught us The Lord’s Prayer understands when we can’t find the words to pray.

We don’t have to understand it all. We don’t even have to understand Jesus. But he will appear to us. At the dining room table. When you’re at the curbside of your business hoping more people place an order. When you dread another Zoom meeting (there is actually something called ‘Zoom Fatigue’ now). When your children come to you and ask, “Why are all the people dying, Mommy?” “When will things get back to normal?” Jesus shows up when you’re not looking, not expecting, and you don’t even know what you are looking for. And he truly understands you better than you understand yourself.

Our expectations may be changed forever. Maybe I will look forward to Easter burgers and Easter hot wings instead of lamb chops from now on. But I will at least know that if I run off to Emmaus in my grief, I will be met by the One who overcame all that makes grief possible, even death itself.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give

us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us

not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever and ever.

Amen.