



TOUCH POINT

The Risen Bread of Life – Touchpoint for April 3, 2024

Luke 24:13-35 (NRSVUE) The Walk to Emmaus

¹³ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ 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?” ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ 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. ²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³ 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. ²⁴ 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.” ²⁵ Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight. ³² 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?” ³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴ They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Peace to you from the mystery in whom we live and move, and have our being.

The Bread of Life has risen indeed!

I always wondered why the practice of Holy Communion was so solemn and ominous. Whenever I preside over the distribution of the elements, I enjoy playing music that provides a contemplative mood. Sometimes I love music that has a groove to it, a rhythm that calls for a sacred saunter to and from the table. I confess there were times in my young Christian years when Communion was a time in which my dialogue with God went something like this:

“I am sorry, and I really mean it this time.”

“I’m sorry I’m still alive and you’re not.”

“I’ll try not to get in your way from now on.”

Maybe it is because of the lines, “He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed” and it’s all your fault! So let us now partake in the act of the Holy Whew!

I know I've preached of sitting with the Good Fridays of our lives, and not seeking a bypass to the Easter part.

Marcus Borg speaks of the Pre-Easter and Post-Easter Jesus. Today, are we experiencing the post-Easter Jesus or the pre-Easter Jesus? Perhaps the men on their way to Emmaus were still experiencing the pre-Easter Jesus and could not recognize the post-Easter Jesus.

Are we still doing the same? Are we taking Communion as a Good Friday experience? Are we still on Saturday's wait, or are we enjoying the feast of life? Is the Communion experience a last supper or a renewing first meal for the feast of life?

Our spirituality must be more than being still and watching each other gray, while sitting in the chairs of meditation and contemplation. Our lives need a holy saunter... a life filled with gratitude and joy. Spirituality for some has resulted in sharing quips bursting with religious eloquence on social media as the goal. Sometimes, it's to write this week's Touchpoint. I think the results are nothing more than spiritual flatulence, though I suppose that has some benefits as well.

The post-Easter Jesus is one of perpetual presence and surprise. The sacred companion walking with us as we go, disguised by our expectations and disappointments.

This passage we just heard is begging for a celebration. First, when appearing to Mary, Jesus said, "Mary, do not hold on to me." Though she was euphoric to see him, he didn't want her image of him to be unevolved. "Mary, don't keep me in this place." How painful it must have been to not grab and kiss him, standing only inches away from her. Mary wanted to celebrate... all the disciples did. There was a lot of running going on when the tomb was empty! They wanted to share with their friends the gift of life that had just been opened. Jesus anticipated a new day of lives awash in Spirit's powerful moments of epiphany and love.

Then there's The Rock. No, not the muscle popping actor. It was Peter. Peter, who said he would never deny Jesus, and then under stress, folded like a cheap tunic.

When Jesus greeted the ladies near the tomb, he said, "Go tell our other friends and be sure and tell Peter." Wow! Jesus cared deeply about what Peter must have been going through after writing a check he couldn't cash. What compassion. Peter wanted to celebrate.

Finally, here we have the two men walking on the road to Emmaus. They couldn't pick up hitchhikers back then. They just offered company for a fellow traveler on a long seven-mile walk.

Jesus, a stranger to them, does not reveal himself as he listened to their reflections. They did not recognize Jesus, but something was warming their hearts and resonating in their chest. They explained to Jesus that many were heartbroken that the one they thought would transform their world was killed.

The comedian in me wants to believe Jesus had a great sense of humor with his disguise. Jesus starts walking ahead of the two men and they say, "Dude, come with us. It's late and we all need to eat." Jesus' plan is working perfectly! No more parables, no more feeding them with a spoon. No more pulling grains of wheat to quench their hunger, no more seeds to scatter. No more lessons on how a stalk of wheat grows. The Bread of Life has fully risen and it's time for the feast of life!

They sit down to eat, and Jesus takes their bread and breaks it. The last time he broke bread, it was his invitation to share in this meal. This time they allowed their bread to be broken and shared. What an incredible moment of stunning awareness and connection to the last time they broke bread.

What was the significance of the bread? Perhaps it was a symbol of the shewbread in the Old Testament. Another name for shewbread was the "peace bread" that needed to be always present before God. The Bread of Life is always with us. It's our choice to participate. To participate in the feast of life is to eat the bread shared with others and drink from the

same cup... to find Christ in all things and seek the God of mystery hidden in the mundane. Perhaps Jesus was giving the punch line to an inside joke. With no words spoken, Jesus gave his friends bread and in silent wonder they got the punch line that death had truly been upended.

May we like Mary, never hold on to an unevolved image of Jesus.

May we commune with God together with sacred stillness and a holy saunter.

May we assume the Jesus we follow is in the strangers who walk with us on this journey.

God is apprehended by imagination, intuition, reason, touch, opinion, sense, and name (and so on).

While on quite the other hand,

We find we can't begin to understand him,

So to some it seems a shame to go on.

But he is all things in all,

And he is nothing in any.

He is often found in one think small,

Conversely, he is often missed in many.

– Stephen Schwartz, (Thomas Aquinas) from *Godspell, The Musical*

Amen

Opening Songs

Be Still

(The London Fox Taizé Choir)

Be still, know that I am God

Create in Me

(The Concordia Choir)

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from thy presence and take not the Holy Spirit from me.
Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me with thy free spirit.

Bible Passage

(A passage takes us from one place to another)

Touchpoint

(Where God's story touches our life story)

See Him

(Keith Duke)

See him... 1) Silent and lifeless 2) Alone and forlorn
3) Broken and helpless... crowned with a garland of thorns
4) As son and as brother 5) Related to all
6) Through the grief of a mother... hurting the most of all
7) As healer and teacher 8) As helper and friend
9) As prophet and preacher... Ignore Him? I doubt if you can.

The Meal

The Lord's Prayer

("Our Father," Taizé Reflections)

Benediction

Gaelic Blessing/Deep Peace

(John Rutter, The Cambridge Singers)

Deep peace of the running wave to you. Deep peace of the flowing air to you.
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you. Deep peace of the shining stars to you.
Deep peace of the gentle night to you. Moon and stars pour their healing light on you.
Deep peace of Christ, of Christ the light of the world to you.
Deep peace of Christ to you.

Amen.