

Acts 3:12-19
Psalm 4
1 John 3:1-7
Luke 24:36b-48

Sermon April 18th 2021

Christ Reveals God's Presence to Us

The disciples' lives have been turned upside down. Their leader, mentor, and friend has died. They have spent the last three years dedicating their lives to follow Jesus. "What do we do now? Go back to fishing and tax collecting? Or do we sit in this house forever paralyzed by fear? Or do we do whatever possible to keep Jesus' memory alive?"

"Why did Jesus get crucified anyways? I know Jesus said a few controversial things, but...wasn't he the messiah? Wasn't Jesus supposed to liberate us from Roman Oppression? Everything I believed the last three years is now in question."

The disciples feel confused, empty, afraid, anxious, sad, angry, lonely. Their lives have been torn apart by Jesus' crucifixion.

Now, according to Luke, the disciples have already seen that the tomb where Jesus was put to rest was empty. They had a conversation, and a meal with someone who revealed himself as Jesus in Emmaus. But, neither of these events seem to ease the grief the disciples are feeling. Instead, these events lead them to feel more confused.

There are times in our lives where we can relate to the disciples here. Death stings us all. Grief leaves us feeling confused, empty, afraid, anxious, sad, lonely, angry. Leaving us wondering how to move forward with our lives? Leaving us trying to make sense of all that has happened. Clinging to anyone or anything that shows us that Christ is physically present with us. Clinging to anyone or anything that shows us that God's healing and redeeming love is healing us. An empty tomb (**Image: Of the empty tomb**). A conversation and a meal with the risen Christ. Anything to keep us from falling off the edge of the cliff.

Some of us are grieving over the death of a loved one. Some of us are grieving over the many losses we have experienced during this pandemic. Some of us are grieving over our declining physical or mental health. Some of us are grieving over our loved one's declining physical or mental health. Some of us are grieving over a loss of identity. Some of us are grieving over the loss of a job or our declining financial situation. Some of us are grieving over the loss of relationships (**Image: Of a broken heart**).

Many of us are struggling to feel the Easter spirit this year as we continue to deal with what feels like the never-ending pandemic. Trying to cope with our feelings of anger, sadness, confusion, loneliness, emptiness, fear, and anxiety.

In our gospel this morning, as the disciples grieve, even after seeing the empty tomb. Even after getting a glimpse of Jesus in Emmaus. We see Jesus come to the disciples again. We see that Jesus is persistent in revealing God's healing and redeeming presence to us in the midst of our suffering.

If the empty tomb. If a conversation and a meal isn't enough. Jesus will come again and again until we can see that Jesus is physically present with us.

What is different this time from the other two events the disciples experienced is that Jesus deals with the heart of the problem right off the bat. Jesus brings words of peace to help them calm down from their anxiety and fear. The two emotions that seem to drive our grief.

Once they are calm then they are ready to see and hear Jesus. They are ready to see that Jesus isn't some ghost, but is physically present with them. They are ready to hear the words in scripture that point them to God's healing and redeeming love (**Image: Of an open bible**). They are ready to hear Jesus' invitation to reveal to others this healing and redeeming love. And when they receive the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, they will be ready to follow this invitation. As we see with Peter when he heals someone in the name of Jesus.

Like the disciples, Jesus comes into our lives again and again until we see and hear Jesus.

The Easter story reassures us that Jesus has physically resurrected from the dead and continues to reveal God's healing and redeeming love in our lives today.

Like the disciples, Jesus comes to us as we deal with the fears and anxiety we feel when grieving, and gives us peace. Have you ever felt Christ's peace after a prayer or after a visit from someone or after reading a verse in the bible or after a worship experience? Did this peace open your heart and mind up to see and listen to where God's healing and redeeming love was touching your life?

Like the disciples, Jesus gives us peace, and then reveals his physical presence to us in some way. Have you ever felt Jesus' physical presence after reading a story in the bible? Have you ever felt Jesus' physical presence after a visit from a friend? Have you ever felt Jesus' physical presence after taking communion (**Image: Of someone taking communion**)? Have you ever felt Jesus' physical presence after a prayer? Have you ever felt Jesus' physical presence after helping someone else through their grief?

Easter is where we celebrate Jesus' physical presence in our lives. Where we celebrate God's healing and redeeming love healing us through this presence. We might not see Jesus standing directly in front of us, but Jesus finds ways for us to experience his physical presence. Whether it is through the people Jesus invites into our lives to walk with us in our suffering, or through the religious practices we partake in like communion, prayer (**Image: Of someone praying**), worship, giving, or through the stories of scripture that come alive for us. Giving us hope in God's promise of healing and redemption for our lives.

When we experience Christ's physical presence. When we experience God's healing and redeeming love in the midst of our suffering. We are moved by this love to listen to Jesus' invitation to reveal this love to others.

In our baptism, we too receive the gift of the Holy Spirit that helps us live out this invitation in our world. Like Peter, like Mary, like the rest of the disciples.

This past year we have experienced a lot of grief. And though, we see the light at the end of tunnel, we also, stand in the midst of a third wave that seems to be harder for us to live through than the past two.

Like the disciples, we are exhausted, in need to hear some good news. In need to cling to the Easter story that reassures us that Jesus is physically present with us. Through our loved ones, through our neighbor, in the words we hear in the bible and from the pulpit, in our prayers, in the hymns we sing, in the bread and wine we eat and drink, in our hearts.

Like the disciples, we are in need to experience Christ's physical presence. We are in need to feel God's healing and redeeming love. In need to feel moved by this love, to listen to Christ's invitation. To reconnect with the Holy Spirit within us so that we too can love others helping them through this time of grief.

Let us pray, gracious God, we are struggling. We are grieving the loss of many things. We long to see and hear your healing and redeeming love. Open our eyes and ears to see and listen to where this love is already present. Give us hope in this love, and encourage us as your church to reveal this love to others. **Amen.**

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