

04.19.26 ~ Easter 3

“Breakfast with the Boys”

The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

Words to Praise

Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19 ^{NIV}

Pew Bible 530, 531

- ¹ I love the Lord, for he heard my voice;
he heard my cry for mercy.
- ² Because he turned his ear to me,
I will call on him as long as I live.
- ³ The cords of death entangled me,
the anguish of the grave came over me;
I was overcome by distress and sorrow.
- ⁴ Then I called on the name of the Lord:
“Lord, save me!” . . .
- ¹² What shall I return to the Lord
for all his goodness to me?
- ¹³ I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the Lord.
- ¹⁴ I will fulfill my vows to the Lord
in the presence of all his people.
- ¹⁵ Precious in the sight of the Lord
is the death of his faithful servants.
- ¹⁶ Truly I am your servant, Lord;
I serve you just as my mother did;
you have freed me from my chains.
- ¹⁷ I will sacrifice a thank offering to you
and call on the name of the Lord.
- ¹⁸ I will fulfill my vows to the Lord
in the presence of all his people,
- ¹⁹ in the courts of the house of the Lord—
in your midst, Jerusalem.
Praise the Lord.

Leader: These Are Words of Praise.

People: Thanks be to God!

Words of Resurrection

Luke 24:13-35 ^{NIV}

Pew Bible 920

On the Road to Emmaus

- ¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing him.

¹⁷ He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

¹⁹ “What things?” he asked.

“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. ²² In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴ Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.”

²⁵ He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

²⁸ As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So, he went in to stay with them.

³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

³³ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together ³⁴ and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” ³⁵ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Leader: This Is How Jesus Appeared to His Disciples!

People: Thanks be to God!

Please pray with me:

Almighty God, we are still excited that Christ is risen from the grave! If we are honest, like the disciples, we would have been surprised and uncertain after witnessing the crucifixion and burial. Yet in our hearts we know there is resurrection! We seek your wisdom and faith to remember this fact every day. We were transformed because of your forgiveness on that cross. Thank you for the many blessings in our lives including the freedom to gather in fellowship and study when so many Christians around the world cannot. May your words burn within our hearts too as we hear them; let us share them with others who don’t know you. Please speak through this familiar message and messenger. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

He is still risen! Hallelujah! Thank you for your prayers this week as I was both inspired and blessed by the creative arts retreat in Lynchburg these past few days; a long and winding ride but a beautiful one in the Virginia Blue Ridge Mountains. *Eagle Eyrie*, a historic Baptist Convention Center, lived up to its excellent reputation. The land grant goes back to 1761 and passed through two families until in 1950 the Baptist General Association of Virginia purchased the property to hold children's, youth, music, and adult retreats and conferences for 20,000 Christian visitors each year ever since. It wasn't fancy and there were lots of steps and hills because everything was built into the mountain, but the food and the people were wonderful. Female leaders in diverse ministry positions from Virginia, North Carolina and even Pittsburgh, PA were present for worship, rest, fellowship, and creative expression (like painting, photography, writing, poetry, collage), all the while listening for God's voice and direction. Shalom Creatives, Madison Heights Baptist Church, and CBF partnered to provide generous hospitality, daily prayer cards, and reduced rates. God was fully present there, and see, Baptists **can** work together!

We all have our favorite Psalms, some of which we have memorized or others where the page in our Bible opens automatically to or is dog-eared for quick reference in challenging times. Psalm 121, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help (KJV)" and the twenty-third psalm both came to mind looking up at the hills and mountains the last few days. Like so many psalm poems, the writer praises God for delivering him from almost certain death. He cried out to God to save him, and He did. As you heard in the reading or you can re-

read, God's love and compassion protect those in need. The writer wanted to know how to repay God for his generosity and goodness, but of course, repayment was never and still is not required. God's goodness is unconditional. Yet it **is** good to thank him, so we do not take his blessings for granted.

God cares deeply for his believers; we can use this reminder when facing physical death but also in facing struggles that increase our worry or distress. One turn of the century scholar used the word "gloom" to describe a hopeless feeling sometimes brought on by illness, war, economic hardship, or relational division. The bottom line is that God hears our plea for healing and comfort from anxiety. God even listens to the smallest of our worries! He hears our voices even among the millions of prayer requests sent to him. It is true that sometimes the Lord's answer to our prayer needs takes more time than we want it to, so we must wait. There are several verses addressing this issue: "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles . . . (Isaiah 40:31)" and "Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for him... (Psalm 37:7)."

This waiting time was happening for the disciples after Jesus' death and resurrection. They were trying to be strong and steady as they interpreted and were still processing what they had seen or heard about Jesus, their friend, and some were in hiding. That is the setting of our second passage. Remember, we too are waiting for his promise of Pentecost! After Jesus' appearances to the disciples in the upper room, Jesus appeared 6-8 other times in a 40-day period. Two of the other 70 followers, not the eleven, had just left Jerusalem to go back home to

Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem; it was northwest through natural green areas.

Cleopas and his friend were sad and visibly upset trying to make sense of things they had witnessed in Jerusalem when a stranger walked up to them. Now, of course, we know that stranger was Jesus in non-corporeal form, but they just saw a fellow traveler and invited him to join them. When they set out for the journey the sun was not yet up which was a good thing to move about more cautiously (Matthew says walked “in the shadows”). They welcomed this outsider, who asked why they were so upset. He addressed them as friends and wished to console them. Cleopas couldn’t believe that even this stranger did not know what had happened to the innocent man in Jerusalem. So, they told him all about losing their teacher/Rabbi: the trial, the cross, and the women finding an empty tomb!

They had walked the entire day and assumed the visitor was going on further and would need rest, so they invited him to stay the night. They showed him generous hospitality with an evening meal. During that meal and the breaking of the bread (which the stranger did), their eyes were opened, and they realized it was their Savior, Jesus Christ! A similar appearance occurs in John 21, when Jesus appeared to some of the eleven disciples near the Sea of Tiberias and has breakfast with them. At first, they do not understand who it is they are with. Can you imagine? During Easter we were in John, so I had the breakfast story on the brain, but when I began writing, I realized the Luke passage was supper. Sorry about the confusing and glib sermon title! Either way, the point is that we don’t often realize Jesus is in the room with us when important *Kairos*

moments occur. So, we do need quiet time to think, pray, and read our Bibles; this builds the connections between what we see, feel, touch, taste, and hear from God. Are we paying enough attention in our daily walk to notice Jesus if he were to visit us today? He left just as quickly as he came; and these two, Cleopas and his friend, did not see him again. They could have pondered this news and good fortune, but later that night, they made the return journey back to Jerusalem to tell the eleven disciples. They excitedly explained what they had experienced and how they had had a meal with the risen Lord! This confirmed the other visions where Jesus had appeared to Simon Peter and “the boys” at breakfast or to others. Would you have shared the good news that Jesus had risen? He had not yet ascended, so we disciples will learn more as we go on. Amen? Amen! ||

Please pray with me: Dear Jesus, we love you. We thank you for your sacrifice and forgiveness. You are the source and foundation of our love and God’s grace. Help us to be grounded in the roots of resurrection, nourished and strong like the trunk of your Word; give us courage to branch out to others who do not know you. Let us share the fragrance of Christ’s salvation, like the budding trees and flowers. We ask you, Lord, to bless our efforts and open these doors to the broken-hearted and the open-hearted so that Psalm 116 becomes real and supportive in daily struggles. We pray in your name, Amen.