



# CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

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"Seeing Resurrection" - The Third Sunday of Easter 4/26/2020

## [Lessons from the Third Sunday of Easter](#)

One of the things I find myself talking about a lot during the season of Easter is to remind people that Easter is not a one-time event. It wasn't just that Jesus rose from the grave on Easter day and defeated the powers of sin, death, and the grave once and for all. It's rather that Easter is a kind of reality that we have to enter into, that we have to begin to start to see resurrection wherever we look. And that's the main comfort and that's the main strength and joy and power of what it means to proclaim Jesus as a risen Messiah. It's to see resurrection even in the face of death, even in the face of destruction, even in the face of disease, even in the face of fear to say, nonetheless, Christ is risen. Hallelujah.

But to enter into that reality, we have to take these images and these stories of Jesus rising from the dead, the appearances in the scriptures that we read and see them as not just a testimony of something that happened once for all, but a kind of lens through which we have to see resurrection as it appears around us.

And from the beginning, Christians have tried to take the passages of the resurrection of Jesus and to imagine their way into them so that they can see what it would be like for them to see the world around them in a new way, in a way, with resurrection eyes. And this all goes with the grain of the collect that we pray for today, which is to give thanks for Jesus appearing to us in today's gospel through the breaking of bread, and to ask God to open the eyes of our faith, to say in the collect through the breaking of bread that not only refers to the Eucharist that we celebrate together to the Body and Blood of Christ, that we celebrate and partake in as sacred bread and wine.

But it also means that every day life, the breaking of bread we do in every day, those are no less Holy that Christ has come into our world to transform our world from within and through and through. And that is to make sacred and Holy every moment in which we come together and have the kind of communion with one another that happens when people break bread together.

And the second part of that collect to open the eyes of our faith, that is what needs to happen to us in the Easter season. We need to start to think what it means to have our eyes of faith open so that we can see the world around us as it

truly is, as a place of transformation and hope and joy that is groaning, like we read in the Paul's letter to the Romans, groaning and waiting and giving birth to the new heaven, a new earth that Jesus has brought to us through His own death and resurrection.

And the way we open our eyes of faith is by putting on, as John Calvin told us, the scriptures that we read and using them like spectacles to see the world around us. So the task for you today and the task for me today is to take this incredible passage from the Gospel of Luke and to somehow see it as a kind of lens into our own life. And oftentimes you and I will find different threads and different points in this incredible passage that will give us a particular kind of revelation of God.

And so as we read through it, you might be taken by the fact that the disciples are leaving Jerusalem because they're fleeing the scene of a crime. And there might be moments in our life in which we find ourselves running away only to find God walking right alongside us as they did. And there are times in our life in which we are sad and heartbroken, and we cannot hold our lives together when the narrative thread of our life seems to go missing. And yet again, we discover that Christ is with us to kind of create a wider story into which to fit our own small broken story so that we can see through that larger story, a kind of path to our own redemption. And so Jesus comes alongside the disciples and He interprets the scriptures for them so that they could see Him as He truly is.

Of course, sometimes we go through and we experience Jesus in disguise. We find ourselves somewhat encountering a person who is like Christ to us. They reveal to us the depth of God's love and compassion and mercy. And we realize that they are not just speaking for themselves, but they're speaking for Christ. And this is part of what it means for Christ to be with them and to have them feel the burning of their hearts while He is with them and speaking to them.

And then finally, of course, there is that moment in which Jesus breaks the bread and suddenly the disciples see that it is not just a wonderful kind, compassionate, learned traveler that they've had alongside them the whole way but in fact, God himself is with them, a risen Lord, who has somehow appeared from beyond the grave and death as He truly is in His fullness of his humanity and has shown to us that there is no place on this earth where He will not be present.

There is no absence where God is not already present because Jesus has tasted the absence of death and has come to give and proclaim life. And so even in that moment of breaking bread and that moment in which you have a meal together, there is this moment in which Christ is present and this is to transform all the meals you find yourself in, no matter how rushed, no matter how simple, each feast we have together is a Eucharistic feast.

So the question you have is to look at this passage and put on this passage as if it were a pair of spectacles that you can see reality better through it. And I want to

present to you a couple of images from the life of Michelangelo Caravaggio who painted this scene from today's gospel twice in his life.

The first one comes from a time, 1602, he painted it when he was in Rome. And this painting is an incredible display of his power. When he was in Rome as a young man, Caravaggio was the toast of the town. He was probably the most sought after artist in the city. And this is an incredible piece that shows some of his characteristic pension for chiaroscuro, for brightness and shade, to create a kind of theatricality on the canvas.

And here you see this incredibly beautiful symbolic depiction of the dinner at Emmaus, the supper at Emmaus. You have Jesus at the center blessing and immediately revealing that He is not merely a traveler, but the Lord Himself. And here Jesus looks as in some other accounts, other paintings that Michelangelo did. He looks young and beardless and full of life as if death did not touch Him.

And this is to pick up on a line that we have in the gospel of Mark, where in Mark 16, the message that is given to the woman is that somehow Jesus has appeared in another form to two people on the road. And so here you have Jesus appearing in another form, as a young man, somehow untouched by anything that had happened to him. And you have this disciple here, which is Cleopas, and he has thrown his arms wide open in amazement. And that is of course, another symbolic kind of imaging of the Cross and the crucifixion, the death of Christ, which now is firmly into the background of things.

And then you have on the table this incredible display of food and the perching of the basket right here is meant to show how things have been completely destabilized by Christ. And you have at the front an apple that is slowly starting to rot. And that's meant to be a reference to the apple that started things off in the Garden of Eden, that in that apple, there was the moment in which when Adam and Eve took hold of it and bit it, they allowed sin and death to enter into the world.

But sin and death have actually been destabilized by the resurrection of Christ. And over here you have an animal, a little chicken that has been cooked. And that's meant to symbolize the sacrifice that Christ has given on the Cross. You have the bread, which is the most obvious reference to the communion or the Eucharist, and as well as wine in the background, which is meant to symbolize the blood of Christ.

And finally you have some water, which is in a glass jar, and the way the light comes through that jar and in through that water, that's meant to symbolize in some sense, the fact that God has shined through the human life of Christ without obliterating Christ's humanity. And finally you have on the left side, the other disciple, there's a tear in his jacket, which is to signify that he is an ordinary person who is seeing extraordinary things and he's kind of jumping out of his chair.

And finally, you have the bar keeper or the tavern keeper, the innkeeper. And that looks vaguely like Caravaggio himself who has come in somehow wearing his cap because he is caught completely unaware that he is suddenly being present and witness to incredible holiness to the Lord Himself in His midst.

Caravaggio paints this painting again at the height of his status as a painter. And he wants to show us everything that is going on. He even wants us to see this shell right here, that Cleopas is wearing, which is meant to be a kind of indication that these are not two disciples who are running away from Jerusalem as we read in the scriptures.

But in reality, pilgrims on their way to a Holy place because in that time and place in which Caravaggio was painting, pilgrims would pin a shell on their lapel so that you would know that they were pilgrims. And so he's trying to have in a very elaborate way, a sense of what it means for us to see through this scripture, to what it means to be a resurrected people meeting a risen Lord. And perhaps, in some ways it's the shell that is the key image in this painting, because it's to remind us that you and I are on an earthly pilgrimage wherever we go. Looking for a resurrected Christ, looking for holiness, looking to be transformed, looking to be changed.

The second painting Caravaggio does in about 1606, only four years later, but his life has been completely turned inside out. He has been involved in a lot of conflicts because of his anger, because he tends to be impulsive and he tends to fight. And so he has maimed a soldier and he has killed a man in a duel, and he's known for being quite a carouser. And he has to flee Rome for his life. He's being sought after by the law and so he has to leave Rome as a refugee and he finds his way to Naples. And then instead of using lifelike figures, models that he can use to paint, he has to paint from his imagination. And he paints a very different Supper at Emmaus here.

This is a Caravaggio that has been beaten down by life a bit, a Caravaggio that's trying to learn repentance, that is looking for resurrection when he seems to be surrounded by death. And so this image of the Supper at Emmaus is a completely different kind of tone. It's not a display of strength, but it's kind of a muted and beautiful display of compassion and mercy even in the midst of death. And so you have, instead of an elaborately laid in table, you just have wine and you have bread. And instead of Jesus being young and full of life and untouched by death, you have a Jesus who looks like he has fully experienced the power and the suffering of death itself, but still is nonetheless alive.

And you have the gestures of the two disciples looking as if they are a little more astonished and astounded and not so much thrilled or exalted. They are just trying to somehow find their way through and suddenly they see that bread and wine and they're able to endure the kind of loneliness that someone experiences when they have been completely disillusioned.

And finally in the center of the painting, in a sense, there are the two tavern keepers, the innkeepers, and these are not models in the normal sense. Some have surmised that there was a sense in which Caravaggio picked and used as his models in his mind two innkeepers who protected him while he was fleeing Rome to people that just took him in, ordinary people that hit him so that he didn't have to face the consequences of his actions.

And these two tavern keepers are looking on Christ as He is blessing the bread and blessing the wine. And they are both not completely knowing, but not completely unknowing. They know that they're entering into a deeper mystery and they know that there is hope and life in this and they are trusting in God and there is a kind of resignation in their faces and a kind of compassion in the light that has cast upon them.

If we were to look in the scriptures for the kind of Old Testament precursor to this painting in 1606, we would probably be thinking of a moment in which the Prophet Elijah is fleeing for his life, and he is fed on his way while he was starving by crows and ravens who bring him little bits and morsels of bread until he finally goes up onto the holy mountain and sees God as a still, small voice.

And the Lord that Caravaggio paints and meets in this painting is no less real of course than the Lord that he paints and meets and the painting he does in 1602. It's just that Caravaggio as a good artist is recognizing that to see resurrection around him means seeing everything that he sees and finding in that somehow a kind of sacramental transformation of his world. So that even though he is experiencing death more intimately there, he can still see the life that shines through death. And even though in this earlier painting, he experiences life in all of its abundance. He knows that there is something more powerful even than that symbolic display that he took such joy in.

If some were to ask me which one is the more true of these paintings, I am not sure what I would answer. I think they're both true and that is not to question the fact that Jesus actually rose from the dead as if someone were getting up from a long sleep. But it's rather to say that the truth of the resurrection for Caravaggio wasn't just an event, but it was a reality and being true to that reality means being true to who he was and where he was at the moment he begins to pray to his resurrected Lord.

I want to offer you some questions that you can use as you ponder this passage as we go forward today. They're found on page H in your bulletin. What journey are you on as you revisit this passage? What would a journey to meet the risen Lord look like for you? When have the scriptures been opened up for you in a powerful way? Where have you seen Jesus in disguise? When have you invited someone in and met Jesus in the process? What does the bread of resurrection look like to you? When last did your heart burn with love? What sustains you and gives you the spiritual food you need in this time of resurrection?

May each of us see this world we live in through the lens of a risen Lord.

Amen.