



Gaylord United Church of Christ

318 4th Street Gaylord MN 55334

Third Sunday of Easter

April 26, 2020

PRELUDE

SANDY WENTZLOFF

WELCOME AND NEWS OF THE CHURCH

NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE OR WHERE YOU ARE ON LIFE'S JOURNEY,
YOU ARE WELCOME AT GAYLORD UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST.

WE CONTINUE TO WORSHIP ONLINE AT: <https://listen2god.org/weekly-message/>

THE WORSHIP VIDEO WILL BE POSTED FRIDAY OR SATURDAY EACH WEEK UNTIL
WE COME TOGETHER AGAIN!

The Call

PSALM 116 – A PSALM OF THANKSGIVING

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!" ⁵ The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. ⁶ The LORD protects the unwary; when I was brought low, he saved me. ⁷ Return to your rest, my soul, for the LORD has been good to you. ⁸ For you, LORD, have delivered me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, ⁹ that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living. ¹⁰ I trusted in the LORD when I said, "I am greatly afflicted." 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. 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.

GATHERING HYMN:

"MY SHEPHERD IS THE LIVING GOD"

NCH #247

**My shepherd is the living God, I therefore nothing need;
In pastures fair, near pleasant streams you settle me to feed.
You bring my wandering spirit back when I forsake your ways,
And lead me for you mercy's sake in paths of truth and grace.**

**When I walk through the shades of death, your presence is my stay;
A word of your supporting breath drives all my fear away.
Your hand, in sight of all my foes, does still my table spread;
My cup with blessing overflows, your oil anoints my head.**

**The sure provisions of my God attend me all my days;
O may your house be my abode, and all my work be praise.
There would I find a settled rest, while others come and go
No more a stranger or a guest, but like a child at home.**

Opening Prayer

Loving God, we welcome your living presence in our midst.
Share our joy and our thanks for the life you give us.
Dance among us! Pray with us! Shower us with your love! Amen!

Call to Confession

Heavenly Stranger, our Companion on the Way, we yearn for your love and grace. We seek your wisdom and guidance. We relish the joy which burns within our hearts when you are with us. Yet, sometimes we would cling to you, hoard the blessings of relationship with you, and not share your love with others. Forgive us, Dear One. Remind us that your love is to be carried throughout the world. Press to share the hope and joy of your love, so that someone who hungers for spiritual food may be filled with our witness of your grace. Shine the light of your Spirit through us, so that we may show your Way to those who long for peace, and help to revive those in whom hope has died. Amen.

Words of Assurance

God may come to us, unrecognized, as a stranger. The Risen Christ reaches out to us in unexpected ways, as we travel our own roads to Emmaus. May the word of our Still-speaking God continue to burn in our hearts. Know that you are forgiven, and be at peace. Amen.

Prayer of Illumination

Lord, you opened the meaning of the Scriptures to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, and set their hearts ablaze. By the power of your Spirit, kindle our hearts as we hear your word proclaimed, that we may receive you with joy.

Scripture Luke 24: 13 – 35 (“The Road to Emmaus”)

¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles^[a] 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.

Homily

“Jesus Meets Us on the Way”

Dr. John McKay

The Road to Emmaus

Today is the third Sunday after Easter! It certainly doesn't SEEM like it, because Churches have been closed since before Easter, and we feel that we have not celebrated the Resurrection of our Lord properly, or at all. Most Churches are doing what we are doing – video-taping a shortened service a few days early, and then airing it on the appropriate Sunday.

Also, we are so preoccupied with the present pandemic that we can hardly think of anything else. As Christians, we wonder what is going on. Has God abandoned us? Is God “allowing” this to happen? Are we being punished? Is the earth itself seeking revenge for all the damage we have done to it? Both Psalm 116 and Luke's story of The Road to Emmaus are part of the lectionary for today, and I think that the Psalm can offer us hope, courage and consolation in this dreadful time, and I think that Luke's wonderful story speaks to us about the presence of God in our lives.

Psalm 116 bears the title “Thanksgiving for Recovery from Illness”. Some illness or great evil has overtaken the Psalmist. But the Psalmist prayed to the Lord, and the Lord saved him.

It seems that the Psalmist has dedicated his life to thanksgiving and praise of God IN PUBLIC, so that everyone who meets him will know of God's goodness and saving grace

I do not want to belabor the point, as it's clear enough, but I DO want to make one point, and that is that God has a perspective that we cannot know.

Some of you may remember that, in 1998, the town of St. Peter was devastated by a tornado. In fact, it happened at 5:00 p.m. on Palm Sunday. The damage was terrible. More than 200 homes were destroyed, and 80% of the windows at Gustavus were blown out – it was horrible!

But, when the wreckage was cleared away, when the homes were rebuilt, and when new trees were planted, our town was transformed into a new life, much more beautiful than it had been before.

So, have hope, have courage, and be consoled. We are being transformed in ways that we cannot know, but we DO know that we will be different and better in ways that we cannot imagine, when this horrible thing is over.

Now, let's think briefly about Luke's story about the two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus. There are several beautiful and touching stories about Jesus meeting his friends after his Resurrection – Jesus and Mary Magdalene at his tomb, Jesus cooks breakfast on the beach for seven of his disciples - John tells this story at the end of HIS Gospel – but Luke's story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is my favorite.

The story takes place on what we now call Easter Sunday, so it was the first day of the week for the Jewish people, not the Sabbath day of rest. The two disciples were walking actually to Jerusalem, but, by dusk, they still had seven miles to go, and they decided to stop for the night at an inn in the small town named Emmaus. I should mention that these last seven miles before Jerusalem were notoriously dangerous, especially at night, because of robbers.

Now, I've just read the story; I'm not going to repeat it, but I'd like us to think, for a moment – how many times did Jesus appear after his Resurrection, and to whom did he show himself?

Well, Paul can help us out here. He records, in his 1st letter to the Corinthians in Chapter 15, SIX appearances. Paul says:

“I handed on to you as of the first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than 500 brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared to me.”

Once again, they are:

- Peter
- the 11 disciples with Matthias who replaced Judas
- 500 followers
- Jesus' brother James
- all the apostles, and finally,
- Paul himself.

Paul does not mention the appearance to Mary Magdalene, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, or the story I like to call “Breakfast on the Beach”, which, as I mentioned, comes at the end of John's Gospel.

So that makes nine, now.

Of these nine appearances, four are to only one person at a time, and a fifth appearance is to only two. Don't you think that this is strange? Wouldn't you think that God would want to tear the heavens open and proclaim this cosmic event with choirs of angels, trumpets and drums? This is what I would want – something right out of Hollywood with special effects, lights and action! But, no. God REJECTS my plan – something directed by Steven Spielberg – and continues to reveal himself to us, often quietly, one at a time.

And what does that mean to us today?

We can know God in various ways: by reading Scripture, by praying, and by inviting God into our lives, not only day-to-day, but even minute-to-minute. God loves us, and wants only good for us.

Let's come to God in thanksgiving, even in challenging times like these. Amen.

Prayers of the People and 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. Amen.

Abide with me; fast falls the eventide; The shadows deepens; Lord, with me abide; When other helpers fail and comforts flee, Help of the helpless, O, abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day; Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away; Change and decay in all around I see—O Christ who changes not, abide with me.

I fear no foe, with you at hand to bless; Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness; Where is death's sting? Where, grave, your victory? I triumph still, if you abide with me.

Hold now Your cross before my closing eyes; Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies; Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee; In life, in death, O Christ, abide with me.

Charge and Benediction

Friends, rejoice in the mothering and fathering love of God! Rejoice in the victorious life of our Risen Savior! Rejoice in the power of the Spirit! Go, live in the love of Christ! Go, serve in the name of Christ! Let your love of God embrace your children, your family, your enemies, those who are far off, those who are strangers met on the road. May your lives praise the Lord!

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace. Amen.

Postlude

Sandy Wentzloff

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Thank you to Dr. John McKay for leading our Worship Service today.

Remember in Prayer

Bill Cowell, Eunice Gasow, Aggie Schue, Howard Armstrong's brother Greg Armstrong. We pray for others who have been ill or are home bound and those at Oak Terrace and Golden Hearts. We pray for health and healing for all people everywhere since everyone is affected by this virus in some way. We pray with anticipation for the day we can all gather again with our church family. Pray for the ministries of our church. Pray for those serving in the military and for our local and national leaders.

Your pledge can be mailed to:

Gaylord United Church of Christ P.O. Box 385 Gaylord, MN 55334-0385
or you can *drop it off at church on Wednesdays when the office is open.*
Thank You.

If you have a prayer request or would like to receive a call from Pastor Dennis call his office at 237-2595 (leave a private voice mail) or his cell 763-258-3371.

E-mail: dmckee545@gmail.com

Our Website: listen2god.org

For the sermon: <https://listen2god.org/weekly-message/>

