

Christ the Lord Episcopal Church Pinhole, CA

The Third Sunday of Easter: April 23, 2023

Emma's Communion

Rev. Dr. Lois Williams

Good morning and welcome to Christ the Lord Church on this third Sunday of Easter. I remember last year we had this Gospel story, the road to Emma's as it is often called, acted out for us. We had an opportunity to ask ourselves what it would feel like to think that Jesus' tragic end had no purpose, and then see Christ himself.

So this year, it seems the theme is the development of Christ through his journey of miracles. Last Sunday we discussed how it seems the miracles kept increasing in their intensity, from changing water into wine, until the resurrection. I wonder if this is a way of training the disciples to be able to accept God through Jesus in their midst, starting small and leading to today.

The resurrection in and of itself, as all the miracles were, are another way that God was showing us that our world, is truly at His command. Not supernatural events, but things moved by the Ultimate mover, and in this case in the form of Jesus.

If we trace these last few days during the resurrection, we have Jesus state that he can not be touched yet, he has not completely ascended. We notice that it is only after Jesus calls out to Mary that she recognizes him, and now we have the travelers to Emma's who are joined by Jesus who appears to them as a stranger, only to transform to his recognizable self at the dinner table.

I love this story. This is the story of the Cosmic Christ. While turning water into wine is the beginning of the journey, Jesus now takes on his God abilities to be anyone, anywhere at any time.

Why is it so important that Jesus show up to strangers? Why does he appear to them to be other than Jesus? Why the recognition at the table?

The answers to these questions are at the heart of our faith. We see here in the journey to Emma's, Christ appearing and discussing the scriptures in a form that is acceptable to these travelers. They can feel something transforming in them, but it seems they are just sharing stories with this ordinary stranger.

Oh the true glory of God shown right here. God is with us even when we can not recognize Him ourselves. Sometimes only to be revealed a decade later when putting the pieces of our lives in order as we look back and see all the pieces fit. The so often referred to poem, *Footprints in the Sand* are wonderful words about Christ carrying us through the tough spots.

Jesus, **The Christ**, is not to be argued over his Jewishness, his Christianity, his skin or hair color, not even his gender, this is the Cosmic Christ and he can show up where ever he is called. Where ever two or three are gathered in His name. Christ is with us, not against us. It is not his intention to put up stumbling blocks to our prayers, even if it includes showing up as we would expect and accept him rather than in a historically accurate fashion.

The story of Emma's happens every Sunday, right here at Christ the Lord and in most churches across the world. We come together as strangers, we collect ourselves and then we read scripture which hopefully burns in our hearts.

We preach, teach and present those scriptures to expand on them just as Jesus did, all while journeying together. And then, we come to the table for refreshment and communion where the Cosmic Christ comes through from the holding of prayers and praise, to be recognized, even if only for a moment, as being present in our meal.

And this nourishment, this moment of being in Christ's presence is meant to continue to nourish you for the future. Sara Miles a journalist in her own right, in her novel *Take this Bread* writes,

Communion, I chewed and swallowed it. It was at the absolute center of my faith: wheat and water and yeast and heat; grape and sun and time; bread and wine, transformed into life. I ate it up. I kept coming back for more. And yet, even though church was where I found communion, church couldn't, finally contain it.

Sara goes on to share a journey very similar to the Emma's story as she tends to a terminally ill friend who desired communion after being unable to get comfortable, sick with disease. With nothing but a small piece of toast and juice, Sara recites the prayers she had heard so many times at church, and she experiences Christ in her midst.

Sara explains,

My friend took the sacrament, chewing and swallowing carefully, her dark eyes huge on me. We didn't say anything, She breathed and quieted. In a half an hour I

would tuck her in. Driving home I found myself suddenly stunned and blinking and saying aloud to myself, "Oh my God, it is real."

My desire is that each and everyone of you here experience the presence of the risen Christ when we gather. I hope you open your hearts to experience Jesus and God working in your lives, even if it takes some deep reflection.

Again, from Miles book she states, *We don't understand the Eucharist, or that bread and wine can live within us, so we ritualize the things that hold the mystery. We focus on the container and formalize the mystery.*

Communion is so much more than that. Each time you pray over your meal, gather with others and take a moment of gratitude - Jesus is there.

And if anyone of you feel called to ordained ministry, or any form of lay ministry, let me know. But I do want to put a shout out to the ladies who make this beautiful table happen each and every Sunday. Here at Christ the Lord we set a lovely simple altar table to invite Jesus' presence. If you are called to this ministry, let me know. If you feel called to take communion out into the community, again, say something.

If you are wondering what happened to Sara after her Eucharistic experience. Sara Miles became the founder and director of The Food Pantry, and serves as Director of Ministry at St. Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church in San Francisco.

For he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. Amen

