

## **Day by Day: New Information**

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael – April 26, 2020

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter

**Readings:** Luke 24:13-35

**Reflection:** Psalm 116

**Music:** The Church's One Foundation; This Is My Father's World

**Greeting:** May the grace and peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, be with you on this day! I pray that as we join together in worship, in whatever way we join together, that we be united by one Spirit, serving the Father, in the truth of the Son. Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

**Music:** The Church's One Foundation

1. The church's one foundation  
Is Jesus Christ her Lord;  
She is his new creation  
By water and the Word:  
From heav'n he came and sought her  
To be his holy bride;  
With his own blood he bought her,  
And for her life he died.

2. Elect from ev'ry nation,  
Yet one o'er all the earth,  
Her charter of salvation  
One Lord, one faith, one birth;  
One holy Name she blesses,  
Partakes one holy food.  
And to one hope she presses,  
With ev'ry grace endued.

3. Though with a scornful wonder  
Men see her sore oppressed,  
By schisms rent asunder,  
By heresies distressed,  
Yet saints their watch are keeping,  
Their cry goes up, "How long?"  
And soon the night of weeping  
Shall be the morn of song.

4. The church shall never perish!  
Her dear Lord to defend,  
To guide, sustain and cherish  
Is with her to the end;  
Though there be those that hate her,  
And false sons in her pale,  
Against or foe or traitor  
She ever shall prevail.

5. 'Mid toil and tribulation,  
And tumult of her war,  
She waits the consummation  
Of peace for evermore;  
Till with the vision glorious  
Her longing eyes are blest,  
And the great church victorious  
Shall be the church at rest.

6. Yet she on earth hath union  
With the God the Three in One,  
And mystic sweet communion  
With those whose rest is won:  
O happy ones and holy!  
Lord, give us grace that we,  
Like them, the meek and lowly,  
On high may dwell with thee.

**Prayer:** Lord of Life, submitting to death, you conquered the grave. By being lifted on a cross you draw all peoples to you. By being raised from the dead you restored to humanity all that we had lost through sin. Throughout these fifty days of Easter we proclaim the marvelous mystery of death and resurrection. For all praise is yours, now and throughout eternity. Amen.

**Reflection:** Psalm 116

*I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my supplications. Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live. The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish. Then I called on the name of the Lord: "O Lord, I pray, save my life!"*

*Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; our God is merciful. The Lord protects the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me. Return, O my soul, to your rest, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.*

*For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling. I walk before the Lord in the land of the living. I kept my faith, even when I said, "I am greatly afflicted"; I said in my consternation, "Everyone is a liar."*

*What shall I return to the Lord for all his bounty to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord, I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful ones. O Lord, I am your servant; I am your servant, the child of your serving girl. You have loosed my bonds. I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice and call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the house of the Lord, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the Lord! (Psalm 116 NRSV\*)*

We read the words of Psalm 116 and we are reminded that God hears our words. That God's grace reaches out to us and God's mercy is abundantly available to us. As we read about how God sets us free, let us meditate upon God's gift to us. How do you lift up your voice to God? What would you return to the Lord for all he has done? Do you proclaim all that God does in your life? How do you praise God?

**Prayer:** O God, our bread, our milk, our honey: In the resurrection of your Son you have brought us to your table. Feed us with your plenty and enlarge our table for all the hungry. Let us always call upon you, knowing that hear us in your great mercy. Help us in all that we are and all that we do. Let us speak your praise and glorify your name. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our Gospel reading for today comes from the Gospel according to Luke, chapter 24, verses 13 through 35.

*Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him." Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.*

*As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.*

*(Luke 24:13-35 NRSV\*)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

There is always a question that comes up, and it really doesn't matter who is discussing this reading. The question comes up as to why Jesus would not have immediately made himself known. Why would he hide his identity from his followers? I think that current events

may have at least given me one reason why, but I think it is a pretty good one. And it has to do with taking in new information.

I've been watching things play out, and without a lot of other outlets that can be easily accessed with children yelling and wanting one's attention, I've been taking in a lot of current events on social media. This is not always a good thing. I go straight to the source for my news and information for the most part, but the social aspect creates dialogue. In some ways good, in others not so much. But I started to understand why someone might want to introduce ideas anonymously. One reason might be that the ideas could get them into a lot of trouble. That trouble might be that their ideas are illegal or that they could get people hurt. It could be that their ideas are simply fabricated nonsense that they don't want to have to be responsible for. However, there's also the idea that a brand-new source doesn't carry preconceived bias with it. After watching much of the partisan bickering online, I've begun to have a new respect for that particular aspect of not knowing who a source is associated with, or even is, but that you have to judge what they say on the merit of what they are saying.

I say this because I have watched politicians on opposite sides of the political spectrum getting all sorts of abuse simply for where they sit on the spectrum. Not from giving out bad information or bad ideas, as we should hold people accountable for those. No, I've watched some very tired, very dedicated people trying to lead through a crisis the best way they can, and then getting backlash *simply for who they are*. I've also seen them get praise simply for "which team" they are on. I've seen bad ideas get rubber stamped by supporters simply because of the political affiliation tied to the speaker. I've seen good ideas get shouted at angrily because of party lines. People are both celebrating and tearing people down because of who they are and who they associate with. Now, I will readily tell you that if I feel an idea is bad, I will point out why I feel it is a bad idea and try to use reliable sources to inform my view. I also do my best to take in new information. But what happens when our bias keeps us from being able to even *learn* something new because our mind is already made up? What happens when we can hear two people say the same thing and judge one poorly and the other kindly all on account of our own bias? And that is when I started to look at Jesus' anonymity very differently than before.

Today's reading comes from the final chapter of Luke's Gospel account, and it comes just after the account of finding the tomb empty. The two walking to Emmaus are well informed. They are already discussing all that has happened. They are approached by a stranger who wants to know what they are talking about. They don't know who they are talking to, so they speak without any preconception about what this person knows. And I think this is the key to it all. They recount what happened at the tomb, what they were told, what happened when others went to investigate – they recount the story. Then this "stranger" responds by teaching them by interpreting the scriptures. Now, we read this and know that Jesus is just telling them about himself. But what is it they hear? They hear a stranger telling them something that they want to be able to judge and process and think about. Why does this matter? Well, as I was just saying,

people can handle information differently when coming from different people. Imagine that you were discussing the empty tomb and wondering what it means when Jesus just shows up on the road. The teacher has returned! You will celebrate! You'll be so excited that you might not be able to pay attention. You might also know that you'll trust anything he says at this point and might not actually absorb any of it. Why would you, he's here, he can tell you again if you forget it a dozen times! I began to wonder if they would have actually remembered anything besides the fact that he appeared on the road to them. But they don't see Jesus. They see a stranger. They are talking to someone who is presenting new information. The disciples want to hear what this stranger says. They want to absorb it so they can judge it for themselves. They want to listen and remember so that they can share it with the others later and decide if what this person says is true. They want to process new information in a productive way.

So they talk until they come near the village. And Jesus still hasn't shown himself to them. I feel like this is the second part of their test. Jesus begins to just walk on ahead. He's told them what they need to know, now he gets to see how they will respond. They respond with invitation. I imagine this is exactly what he was waiting for. Do they show kindness and grace to this stranger on the road who has just had a lengthy discourse with them? They do. They strongly urge him to stay with them instead of going on. The day is almost over so he should just retire for the night. Which means they also invite him to come eat with them. You may remember that eating with someone carried a lot of significance. Jesus was chided for eating with sinners. You were supposed to accept someone to eat with them. The disciples invite this stranger to come in and break bread with them. They have received the stranger's word with grace and responded with kindness. It is at this point that Jesus breaks bread and reveals himself to them. And then he's gone. So they go back to the others and tell them all about what happened. As I read this, I couldn't help but feel that all of this was to help them understand and to make sure they were on the right path.

Jesus is still doing this to us today. Sometimes it is advice from an unlikely source that speaks right to us. Maybe it is hearing something that we needed to hear in an unusual place. In other ways, it is that idea that if anyone we meet on the road could be Jesus trying to teach us, maybe we should pay more attention to the people we interact with. Maybe we shouldn't be too quick to shoot down someone because of how they lean and instead try to listen to new information with open ears, open eyes, and a little grace. In trying times, it is easy to cling to what we think we already know and say that is enough. But what if the disciples on the road decided that what they knew already was enough and that they didn't need to listen to somebody they just met on the road. What if they had decided that an outsider was an outsider, no matter what, and turned Jesus away? It might be hard to imagine, but we do it all the time. We decide that change isn't any good for us, so we ignore anything that might force us to change what we do or how we think. Sometimes we get so rooted in our old information that new information is not welcome, no matter who the source is. I know this is true because I know people that heard a false story in the 1970s and still believe it to this day. We get rooted

so heavily in what we think we know that we can begin to lock out any new ideas. The problem we quickly get with today's scripture in mind is that we can be so set in not wanting to hear anything new that we might even lock out Christ.

This is a difficult thing to navigate too, but it means that we have to use what God gave us to take in new information. Just like the disciples on the road, we need to be able listen and process new information to discern if it is trustworthy. I feel that I need to say that we always need to discern new information. Because what if the stranger on the road *wasn't* Jesus? What if it was a voice peddling a conspiracy theory and it offered up nothing of value? What if it was just a fear mongering voice? Well, the good news is that by listening and processing this new information we can hear those things. We can decide. But we need to learn to make those calls after we hear. Sometimes it will be easy, like getting bad medical advice from someone who is not a doctor. Sometimes it will be difficult, in getting conflicting opinions from two experts. Sometimes it will be very personal, getting information that cannot be proven nor disproven. Then it comes down to faith. So we search to see if we too have a burning in our hearts as we hear the words.

But if there is something central that I wanted to look at in all this, it is that God finds a way to give us what we need. If we need to know, God will find a way for us to hear. It then becomes our job to listen. If Christ is trying to reach us so that we can reach others, we first must be able to listen. We must be able to listen to what God is telling us today. We must be willing to listen to the experience of the people we are trying to reach. If we cannot speak in a meaningful way to them, we will find that our words end up hollow. If Christ had not framed his conversation in a way that would speak to the hearts of his disciples, would they have listened on the road? So we too must understand the people we want to reach. We also must understand ourselves so that we can get past any bias we may have. We must learn to judge a situation for what it is and not through the "team" that we are on. We must learn to offer up our help to those in need, not just those who side with us. We must offer up wisdom that is wise to all, not just those who already agree with us. We must speak to life for all, not just life for those that already know. We must be willing to both receive new information and ready to share new information. Because that is at the core of discipleship. A willingness to learn and serve. Not based on who is worthy, because Christ declared all worthy through the great love he showed on the cross. That we share not in one partisan body that is only for the chosen, but that we are part of one body in Christ, where all may be redeemed by his precious blood. Only when we learn to serve God instead of taming God do we fully come to understand how we serve one another in truth and love. God is bigger than any political party. God is bigger than any affiliation. Christ's sacrifice was not that we would be stagnant and set in our ways, but that we would trust God to always show us what was new and changing so that we would always be ready for what is to come. Let us trust that God will always lead us, always care for us, always help us to process new information so that we can serve the best we can. So that we can live the best we can. So that we can share the best we can. And we do it in truth, in love, and in

grace. It is by that grace we live, and by that grace we find everlasting life. Day by day, we seek to learn and seek to share, and seek to live in peace. Let us do so by following the great example set by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and let us always trust him to see us through to a new tomorrow. Amen.

**Prayer of Confession and Pardon:** Lord, forgive us we pray. We come before you as those who have sinned against you in what we say and do. We come before you as those who have sinned against you in what we do not say and what we do not do. It is in our doings and our failings that we seek your grace and your mercy. We haven't loved you how we should. We haven't loved each other how we should. We are a people who are sorry, who humbly seek your forgiveness. Help us to live with one another in your mercy and your grace. Let us always remember the sacrifice made by our Risen Savior, Jesus Christ, that we may understand your deep love for us. May we honor that love by sharing it with one another, loving as you love and caring as you care. Help us to be of one body redeemed by one blood, serving one God. Amen.

**Offering:** If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed in the weekly update. If you are interested in online giving, please contact me. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

### **Lord's Prayer**

**Music:** This Is My Father's World

1. This is my Father's world,  
and to my listening ears  
all nature sings, and round me rings  
the music of the spheres.

This is my Father's world:  
I rest me in the thought  
of rocks and trees, of skies and seas;  
his hand the wonders wrought.

2. This is my Father's world,  
the birds their carols raise,  
The morning light, the lily white,  
declare their Maker's praise.

This is my Father's world:  
He shines in all that's fair;  
In the rustling grass I hear Him pass;  
He speaks to me everywhere.

3. This is my Father's world.  
O let me ne'er forget  
That though the wrong seems oft so strong,  
God is the ruler yet.

This is my Father's world:  
the battle is not done;  
Jesus who died shall be satisfied,  
And earth and heaven be one.

**Dismissal with Blessing:** We are sent forth in the power of Christ's resurrection. Alleluia! The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Until we meet again. **Amen.**

**Prayer List**

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
John & Angie Veach	Diane Washburn	Bill Calvert	Eric Veach
Cathy Devall	Brock McMorris	Ed & Verna Titus	Hayden Kanizer
Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Laura Eubank Allison	Nancy Sowers
Dave Yaw	Aaron Carrell	Cindy Cisney	Patti Corder & Crew
Joyce Sly	Nancy Hoke	John Millsap	Larry Sidwell
Don Wells	Tricia Adkins	Ty Bradley	Ronnie & Elaine Carlen
Jerry Jackson	Pat Nebel	Don Stewart	Earlene Shupe
Brenda Hurt	Sharron Button	Anne Winkler Heinrichs	Family of Jerry Green
Family of Jerry Jackson			
Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Nora Werner & Family	Wayne & Charlotte Carrell
Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Lois Woolever	Mary White	Nick Nichols
Greg Williams	Eloise Buffenmeyer	Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter
Paul Schulte	Lyle Whitley	Tammy Fischer and Children	

Offerings may be mailed to your local treasurer or addressed to:

Rev Camron D St. Michael

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## **4/26/2020 Update from Pastor Cameron**

Greetings! Time for a weekly update!

We are continuing in our efforts to do no harm, to do good, and to stay in love with God. To do no harm, we must make sure that we do what we can for social distancing to help prevent the spread of the current Coronavirus. To do good, we must offer support and compassion to one another in this difficult time. And to stay in love with God, we remember to pray to God and to worship. Even if that means we worship from home. I thank all of you for your patience as we navigate this difficult time.

We will not be meeting again for certain until June. I will be keeping you as up to date as I can, but right now the restrictions are set because they are working. The state is still seeing new cases, and sadly, new deaths. However, we are seeing fewer cases than if we were just doing things “business as usual” so we need to continue. I know that it can be very frustrating, but I also need you to believe me that it is working. In the coming weeks I will be getting ahold of Church Council chairs to figure out the best way to meet virtually. I will also be figuring out a way to meet with PPRC to discuss our situation as well. Thank you for understanding and I will continue to provide online and in print worship resources. If there is anything else you need from me, please let me know! To be clear, we are not to hold any in person or drive up services until at least June. This is by both order of the state and order of the bishop. We are strong, and we will get through.

Annual Conference has been rescheduled Friday August 14<sup>th</sup> and Saturday August 15<sup>th</sup>. I will not be able to attend because of school being in session at that time.

I am still looking for pictures and music to share in services. We will have at the least two more weeks of online services, so anything you’d like to share is always welcome.

Please let me know of any updates or anyone that is in need of special consideration. I have been having to adapt my schedule to make room for the extra effort involved in making the online worship experience possible and with adapting my schedule to include leading lessons for the kids.

As we continue in the current stay at home order, we are also facing economic problems. Legislation has been passed that will offer economic relief for some. However, we must be prepared as a church to support each other and support those in need. This may have a longer lasting impact than the virus and I urge everyone to be in prayer. Also, be in contact with each other. Please check in on people and let us remain a close-knit community, even when we are practicing safe social distancing. Also, please be aware of scams involving door to door solicitation and also over the phone calls about bank information. The IRS will not call you. Medical professionals will not come to your door. Please be safe.

We do have guidance for a live communion service, but it would need to be done in a live video feed. If anyone is interested in helping put this together, please let me know. I am also looking at if anyone is interested in doing any live activities instead of prerecorded.

I will be continuing to have our worship services online and in print! It is on YouTube and a link can be found on my website as listed below. I am also posting the information on the church Facebook page. If there is anything you would like to contribute, let me know! There will also be printed materials available at the churches to pick up. Please feel free to contact me for more information. If anyone is interested in doing music for any upcoming service, please let me know. There are many options for doing this. I can also share readings or any other video that you'd like to make part of the service. Participation is welcome!

Also, in this time we are still working to keep the bills paid, our missions supported, our apportionments met, and our outreach working. As such, we do need your continued financial support as part of the church. Offerings may be sent to your local treasurer or to the PO Box listed below. I can also arrange to pick them up if I am delivering anything to you. I am personally grateful for all your continued support in this difficult time. I cannot stress enough that the church is still active and we are still together.

If anyone is interested in online groups or interested in how to form one, I am available to help. There are free tools available to be able to still meet online for Sunday School or other meetings.

Please see the CDC website for information on the Coronavirus. If you do go out, please follow all distancing guidelines, and if you can, cover your face. Please let others know, and together we will all see this through safely. This is a very real and very serious pandemic. Please do not share false information about it. It only works to undermine the people doing the dangerous work of trying to keep us all safe. If you have any questions, I am happy to answer them or direct you to a source that can.

Please stay safe. You are all in my prayers. I will keep you updated as best I can. If you have any questions, feel free to contact your Church Council Chair or myself.

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael

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