

2026 Easter 3A

I love the Lord, because he has heard the voice of my supplication, because he has inclined his ear to me whenever I called upon him. Psalm 116:1

That is the way our psalm started this morning. It's beautiful, isn't it? I always encourage us to look for the reasons to be grateful to God every day. To seek out and celebrate those 'ten tiny things' that remind us that God is at work in the world around us. This psalm is one reminding us to respond with thanksgiving to the goodness of God. to worship the Divine Source of All Life.

But I also know that there may be times in your lives when it feels like God is not listening. Not responding. Not on your side.

When it feels like there is nothing to celebrate.

Those two disciples on the road to Emmaus are in that place in today's Gospel reading. We don't know who they are. Not part of the inner circle of the Twelve...or eleven, as it says here. They have already made the adjustment to exclude that traitorous Judas from their mix.

They are walking away from the city, going to this small town seven miles away. They are distancing themselves from the tragedy.

At least physically, geographically.

But their hearts and minds are still in Jerusalem, and all that has happened there in the last few days. They are still confused and grieving, despondent, maybe even a little angry.

Nothing went the way they were expecting.

Someone pointed out on Wednesday that these two might even have been essentially fleeing the city. Trying to get away before others are arrested for being followers of this executed criminal Jesus. Protecting their own skins.

Or maybe they're just walking because it feels like there is nothing else they can do.

Whatever their reasons, they are still pretty much stuck in a Good Friday mindset. Sure, they heard some story about the tomb being empty, but what could that possibly mean? Who would be so cruel as to steal his body?

I don't know about the rest of you, but I find myself in a lot of "Emmaus Road" conversations these days. There is so much confusion, and anger, and fear, and resentment...we all want to talk about it. To offer our thoughts, our interpretations. Our conspiracy theories, even. To rage against the injustice, to rave against the horrible ways in which our faith is being misrepresented...perverted... It can be exhausting.

It's a natural response, and I'm not saying it's bad. Nothing good comes from bottling it up, pretending not to feel the way you're feeling.

But we need to keep our eyes and ears and hearts open, so that we recognize Jesus when he enters the conversation.

The post-resurrection appearances of Jesus have this in common—people don't recognize him at first. It's not just a practical point—why would anyone expect to see the man they put in the tomb three days ago? It's also a theological point.

Resurrection is transformative. It's not that the old life is restored; it's a whole new way of being alive. Resurrection leaves the power of sin and death behind. We are no longer subject to the powers of this earth.

That doesn't mean Empire can't kill us. It can—and will—devastate the bodies of many of those first disciples and many, many more in the two thousand years since. Following Jesus does not guarantee a carefree, prosperous existence free of suffering and sorrow.

But following Jesus teaches us that there is so much more to life than we think. Following Jesus teaches us that Empire has no power over our hearts and souls. Following Jesus leads us into the life of God's Kingdom—not just after death, but now. We can live in the world unafraid of what Empire will do to us, because it cannot touch us at our core.

It cannot force us to stop loving each other, even when it tries. And it does try!

I started my sermon this morning quoting that first line from Psalm 116.

I love the Lord, because he has heard the voice of my supplication, because he has inclined his ear to me whenever I called upon him.

But here's something very important I discovered this week.

That's not what the original Hebrew says.

The original Hebrew says, “I love, because the Lord has heard...”

Not “I love the Lord, because...” Not some transactional, “hey God, I’ll love you as long as you do what I want” but rather, “I have become capable of love because I know that God hears my cry.”

Not because God rushes in and fixes it. Simply because I know I have been heard. God listens.

Those disciples on the road to Emmaus discovered that they didn’t walk alone... they were *heard*. God *listened* to them.

And when they were themselves ready to hear, God-with-Us offered them a new perspective. A resurrection point of view. Jesus (still incognito!) shares an understanding of those past three days that only he could offer. Only the one who had gone through it and seen it from the other side.

Then what did Jesus do? He joined them in the breaking of the bread. He took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it. Recognize that sequence of actions? We remember it every Sunday at the altar in the Eucharist. That sacrament that pours a little grace on the wounds inflicted by the world. Grace that helps us see Christ more and more, to find Jesus in unexpected places.

Grace that reminds us that we have been called to be what we were created to be—people who love.

Love God.

Love our neighbor—no matter what road they are walking.

Love.

That's how the Kingdom of God breaks into and through all the earthly powers of Empire.

God hears the voice of your supplication. Now go love the kingdom into being.

Amen.