

Connecting with the Sunday Readings

Third Sunday of Easter Gospel Word
Luke 24:35–48

The light of Easter expands into a third week of remembering. We are once again given a narrative about Jesus appearing to his followers. Notice that a consistent feature of the Resurrection stories is that the Risen Jesus appeared different and was initially unrecognizable (Luke 24:37; Mark 16:12; John 20:14, 21:4). In this story the disciples who were returning to Emmaus hoped that the events would be different. They thought that Jesus would be the Messiah. Instead, he had suffered and died. The events did not match their expectations. This episode focuses on the Risen Jesus' interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures as he attempts to help the disciples understand that the Messiah did have to suffer and die. Luke is the only New Testament writer to speak explicitly of a suffering Messiah. The disciples remain unconvinced until they recognize him in the breaking of the bread.

—by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Living the Word

It had not worked out the way the disciples had planned. How often that happens to us! We all struggle at times to accept the Good News that Jesus was raised from the dead and is with us today. He is *truly* with us in good times and bad times. Not just as an idea or a memory but as close to us as we are to ourselves. Jesus promised he would not leave us. He left his limited earthly body so that he could be present to *all* of us *all* the time. This is hard to get our hearts around, but it is a central belief of our faith.

The central truths of our faith are far from obvious. In dying we rise to new life. In giving we receive. If someone asks us to walk a mile, walk two. When we go to a banquet, take the last seat. Sometimes, the Gospel seems the opposite of what our culture would advise. So it is. When Jesus died the horrible death of crucifixion, the faith of all his followers was seriously tested. The record showed that few stayed close to him to the end. Most seemed very afraid and put as much distance between themselves and Jesus as they could. So how did they change? We don't know all the details, but here we're given a clue. Jesus opened their minds. God wants us to believe, and God helps us believe. We must be open to receive all that Jesus came to give us, especially the Good News of the Gospel. The Church's celebration of Easter lasts many weeks to give us time to let the power of Christ's Resurrection fill us with faith, hope and love. So be patient and persistent in your pursuit of understanding. If you seriously desire the truth of God, then Jesus with God's Holy Spirit, will open your mind.

One-line Prayer

Faithful Father, strengthen our faith in your love. Help us to support each other on our faith journeys.
 Amen.

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

Third Sunday of Easter

The light of Easter expands to a third week of remembering. We are once again given a narrative about Jesus appearing to his followers. It's good for us to notice that Jesus' after-Resurrection appearances seem to come to those who are not exactly strong in faith. They are like us. We all struggle at times to accept the Good News that Jesus has risen from the dead and is with us today. He is **truly** with us. Not just as an idea or a memory but as close to us as we are to ourselves. He said that he would not leave us, and we would remain close to him forever. Jesus left his limited earthly body so that he could be present to **all** of us **all** the time. This is hard to get our hearts around, but it is a central belief of our faith.

A Gospel Word for the Home

Luke 24:35–48

Jesus appeared to his followers, but if you read between the lines, it's as if they can't believe their eyes. They remained unconvinced. Then we come to a line in the Gospel that is very important: "Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures..." What didn't they understand? And why did he have to "open their minds?"

The central truths of our faith are far from obvious. In dying we rise to new life. In giving we receive. If someone asks us to walk a mile, walk two. When you go to a banquet, take the last seat. Sometimes, the Gospel seems the opposite of what our culture would advise. So it is. When Jesus died the horrible death of crucifixion, the faith of all his followers was seriously tested. The record showed that few stayed close to him to the end. Most seemed very afraid and put as much distance between themselves and Jesus as they could. So how did they change? We don't know all the details, but here we're given a clue. Jesus opened their minds. Later, this would be called the divine gift of faith. God wants us to believe, and God will help. But we must also be open to receive all that Jesus came to give us, especially the Good News of the Gospel.

Thought for the Week

As was mentioned, faith is a gift. God's giving is generous but not without some expectations from God. God wants us to live abundantly, but we also have to do our part in cooperating with God's intentions for us. His Resurrection challenged the early followers of Jesus. They had to let its power sink in over a period of time. We've already noted that the Church's celebration of Easter lasts many weeks to give us time to let the power of Christ's Resurrection fill us with faith, hope, and love. So be patient but also persistent in your pursuit of understanding. If you seriously desire the truth of God, Jesus, with God's Holy Spirit, will open your mind. This is true for parents and children.

—by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Parent Survival

Many parents are worried about the next generation of Christians. They see many young people seemingly drifting away from the faith. People ask: Will Christianity and the Church be around in the future? It's a good question to ponder. But one important aspect of this whole matter is our willingness to let God do God's part as we do our part as parents. What's the role of parents in passing on the faith? First of all, we are to live our faith so that its meaning and joy will be evident to others, especially to our children. "Witness" is a powerful word that basically means, "living our faith." We can also talk about our faith with our children in words they can understand, especially connecting it with daily life. Prayer can also be a powerful way of expressing our faith.

Then there's God's part. Unfortunately, we parents don't have an inside view of God's workings. We have to trust in God. That's very important when we see our children moving in a direction that we may not approve of or understand. God loves all of us. God wants everyone to have a life of spiritual fullness. After we have done all we can to pass on our faith to our children, then we let God do what God does. Results can vary, as we all know. But in the end, we must trust in God and in those we love, our children. That's no small challenge. Faith can be very challenging. Ask those who first saw the Risen Christ. Their first question was not, Do we believe? but rather, Is this a ghost?

Car or Meal Talk

In simple ways, ask your children what religious faith means to them. Also, find ways to express to them what it means to you.

One-Line Prayer

Heavenly Father, strengthen our faith in your love. Help us to support each other on our individual faith journeys. Amen.