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| The Lessons Appointed for Use on the | http://www.lectionarypage.net/Art/Newshield.gif |
| Third Sunday of Easter |
| Year A RCL |

Acts 2:14a,36-41

1 Peter 1:17-23

Luke 24:13-35

Psalm 116:1-3, 10-17

**The Collect**

O God, whose blessed Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread: Open the eyes of our faith, that we may behold him in all his redeeming work; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**The First Lesson**

**Acts 2:14a,36-41**

Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd, “Let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

**The Response**

**Psalm 116:1-3, 10-17**

***Dilexi, quoniam***

1 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.

2 The cords of death entangled me;  
the grip of the grave took hold of me; \*  
I came to grief and sorrow.

3 Then I called upon the Name of the Lord: \*  
"O Lord, I pray you, save my life."

10 How shall I repay the Lord \*  
for all the good things he has done for me?

11 I will lift up the cup of salvation \*  
and call upon the Name of the Lord.

12 I will fulfill my vows to the Lord \*  
in the presence of all his people.

13 Precious in the sight of the Lord \*  
is the death of his servants.

14 O Lord, I am your servant; \*  
I am your servant and the child of your handmaid;  
you have freed me from my bonds.

15 I will offer you the sacrifice of thanksgiving \*  
and call upon the Name of the Lord.

16 I will fulfill my vows to the Lord \*  
in the presence of all his people,

17 In the courts of the Lord'S house, \*  
in the midst of you, O Jerusalem.  
Hallelujah!

**The Epistle**

**1 Peter 1:17-23**

If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.

**The Gospel**

**Luke 24:13-35**

Now on that same day two of Jesus' disciples 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.

The Easter season goes on for 50 days until Pentecost. And try as we may to hang on to it, no matter what, and for whatever reason, the excitement of Easter, as the big day is over. Therefore, the lilies are out of the church. What is classically known as Low Sunday was last week, and we are back to the humdrum of normal church attendance. And I would be lying if I were to say I want it this way. I can say that I don’t wish this for St. Patrick’s; and I don’t wish it for churches anywhere.

Generally, there is a decline in church attendance. And church attendance has come and gone, but America saw its highest church attendance in the 1950s, when St. Patrick’s was built. There is a malaise seen in many of the churches. There is still somewhat of a social club around going to church, we meet our friends, those like us, and we check our proverbial boxes that we do outreach, I mean we are a church afterall.

Yet, in the midst of our returning to our normal church life, there is this amazing, truly abnormal story, one of my favorite ones in the Bible, that has earth-shaking potential. Today’s Gospel gives us the resurrection appearance of Jesus to his disciples on the road to Emmaus. Our Easter day is about the empty tomb, but our easter season has the resurrection appearances throughout. It is a quote of Frederick Buechner’s that states that it was never just about the empty tomb… Specifically he writes this in Listening to your Life: “The earliest reference to the Resurrection was St. Paul’s, and he makes no mention of an empty tomb at all. But the fact of the matter is that in a way it hardly matters how the body of Jesus came to be missing because in the last analysis what convinced people that he had risen from the dead was not the absence of his corpse but his living presence. And so it has been ever since.”

it has ALWAYS been about Jesus showing up after the tomb. So this early story is fantastic and rich and has so much to offer about where are we going and where are we going to find Christ outside of the tomb… So let’s talk for a minute first about where might we find Christ…

I have in mind two answers to this and they both derive from today’s Gospel; maybe you have more, but I have two. One place you will find Christ is in the breaking of the bread. Christ makes himself known to us in the breaking of the bread. He tells us this before he is put to death and after death, there are several appearances whereby we know it is Christ because he breaks bread with his disciples. Today’s Gospel details how the risen Lord is in their midst and teaching them, but the disciples do not actually recongize him until he breaks bread with them.

The second place you are also going to find Christ out in the world, not in the temple or place of worship, with the marginalized, the persecuted, the dark places, and when one thinks life as you know it is over. So imagine what it was like for those first disciples on the road to Emmaus—-their leader, who they thought was going to lead the political charge and overthrow the powers that oppressed, had just been put to death. They heard that his body is not in the tomb where it had been placed and then others see angels or see him. It is strange to be sure. You are 7 miles away and wondering, going back to whatever you did before. So when you, like the disciples, find Christ out in the world don’t expect to suddenly recognize him. It’s not that Christ is necessarily in hiding or incognito. Perhaps it is as Jesus told us all along, we need eyes to see and ears to hear. Then with adjusted ears and eyes, we too can see Christ…

But the stories are great, why do we actually need to see Christ? both in the breaking of the bread and in the difficult parts of life. Well, just like the disciples, when we see and recognize Jesus, our hearts burn within us…

I’ll say that again: Our hearts burn within us…

And so I have a question for the people of St. Patrick’s… a critical question: where are we going to be to recognize Jesus? what is going to set the hearts of St. Patrick’s on fire? I have been here now 8 months, I am not a fortune teller, I cannot foretell the future. Long before I got here, membership at St. Patrick’s had dwindled, but I believe God has something in mind for St. Patrick’s. Whatever God has in mind will be what sets St. Patrick’s on fire. When St. Patrick’s encounters the risen Christ, what makes St. Patrick’s burn?

The answer to this question will become what makes St. Patrick’s even more of a vital living part of the Kingdom of God. Because we are a Christian community, whatever the fuel of the fire is, that will be what St. Patrick’s becomes known for. St. Patrick’s cannot just exist as a community just for the people of St. Patrick’s, it has to bring Christ to the world, or it quits being Christian. We are here in this church to receive the body and blood of Christ, but God knows it was never intended for us or Jesus to stay here.