

1 John 3:1-7 ~ Luke 24:36-48  
*Beginning From Where We Are*  
 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter ~ April 14, 2024 ~ Receiving New Members  
 The Rev. Dr. Laurie Brubaker Davis

*Introduction to Second Scripture Lesson*

"Have you anything here to eat?" Who has a kid or grandkid, spouse, or partner who opens the fridge, hungrily, doesn't see anything obvious to grab, and asks, "Is there anything here to eat?" When Jesus asked his disciples that question in today's story that I am about to read, surely, he was famished. I will remind you here in Luke 24, we are still on the evening of "the day of resurrection." The day of days that started at the crack of dawn for the women who went to the tomb and found it empty-- a day that never seemed to end, especially in Luke. Let's review Jesus' "to do" list for that day: Be raised from the dead, *check*; Walk seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus with Cleopas and his buddies, while teaching them scripture lessons on the walk, *check*. Sit down for dinner with them, break bread, *check*. If that works and they finally recognize me, vanish, *check*. Reappear in Jerusalem, after Cleopas and buddies rejoin my disciples, *check*. No food yet all day for our very active, dare I say, hyperactive, and now extremely hungry Risen Savior.

This is right where our story picks up with the phrase, "While they were talking about this." A scene that is both utterly relatable and every day -- "have you got anything to eat?" -- and at the same time completely other, with mystical, unexplainable, unrecognizable Risen Savior. As I read this text, I invite you to imagine yourself in the room at that table in Jerusalem. You are there with Cleopas, his companions, and the eleven disciples, they are all talking excitedly, interrupting each other, freaking out, trying to figure out what had happened, what was happening. It was all so very strange, confusing, and wonderful.

*Sermon*

"*There it is! There it is! ... Now it's gone,*" said Aidan, age 7, viewing the solar eclipse from the path of totality on Monday, April 8. The day last week, when from Mazatlán, Mexico to Maine, and Canada, the moon passed between the Sun and Earth, completely blocking the face of the sun. Anyone here see it? The eclipse was 89.4 % in Milwaukee. Roughly 31 million people made their way to the path of totality—even for a partial viewing. A sight which brought awe across our land for 1 hour and 28 minutes. The next solar eclipse across the US is not expected to occur for another two decades. But on Monday, we got to see our Creator's celestial ball game in which the moon blocked the sun. A shared moment of unity. Together we watched our one and only Sun, on which we all depend, completely blocked in the middle of the day. Heart-stoppingly beautiful. A moment of "Wow!" Beyond description.

This awe-some event gave us a great gift. It was so dramatic and spectacular that we had to look up and take notice. And realize just how astonishing it is to be a part of a greater story. Beyond differences in politics and culture. We all speak sun, yes? And God gave us an astronomic reminder that we are not the center of the universe. A radical lesson in decentering. From the One who created the sun and the moon and the stars. The same One who came to

earth in the as a baby boy born to Mary. A baby named Jesus. Who grew up and showed us what Love Divine looks like in human form. Our gospels tell us that same kind of darkness came over the whole land at about noon, on the Friday Jesus hung on the cross.. "Darkness came over the whole land... the sun's light failed." And yet we are here today, as witnesses to this truth: Love Divine shines with power that even death could not overcome. Like the moon blocking the sun. But not forever. Like the sun in the sky, the Son of God, shines eternally. Whether we can see it or not.

We don't have to wait for another eclipse to see Jesus. Our wounded, scarred Messiah told his disciples that night, "we begin from here." Meaning, from where we are. Right now. For his disciples in the room that night, "here" was Jerusalem. For us, today in this room, it's Marshfield. Beginning from here. For our on-screen worshippers, wherever you are as you share this worship with us. And also beginning from here (*point to center of palms*). Yes, in those wounds we could see the totality of Christ's love. This sacrificial, compassionate love that has the power to call us out of ourselves. Out of our dead ends, where we are stuck in the center, with our narrow view, our myopic perspective. Whether we think too much of ourselves or too little, Christ is calling us out from that stuck, brittle place. We all share the sun, the moon. We also, every one of us, shares the experience of being wounded and inflicting wounds.

We come together as FPC Marshfield, to remember, as Paul put it in 1 Corinthians 12:27, "Now you are the body of Christ" (1 Cor 12:27). Together we learn what being the body of Christ calls us to be and do. But we begin from here. With repentance and forgiveness. Like Jesus said that night. We begin by being *ekklesia* which means to be called out. *Ekklesia* is the Greek word for church. A community where are called out and called together in order to "practice real love" as Eugene Peterson put it in our first scripture, his rendering of 1 John 3:18. "*No one who lives deeply in Christ makes a practice of sin.*"

Yes: we all mess up. We even keep making the same mistakes over and over. (Do you find yourself confessing the same sins during the silent prayer of confession we have each Sunday?) We are here to be honest. We are here to learn from our sin and try our best *not* to make a practice of it. We are "called out" of dead center, out of ourselves, to practice love: which starts with forgiveness, over and over. Anyone who has ever tried to practice real love will tell you: getting love right takes more than one lifetime. Our call is to continue to begin, again and again. Grace, like the sun, abounds. Thanks be to God.

Today, beloved community, we are about to receive 9 new and reactivated members who have been "called out" to become part of our body of Christ we call FPC. And just after worship, we will elect 10 of our members who have been "called out" to be trained, ordained and/or installed as Ruling Elders and Deacons beginning this summer. Called to share positions of leadership in our body. Just think for a moment of this abundant blessing: the variety of gifts, perspectives, skills, energy, and talents that these 19 folks are bringing. For this we are grateful.

In addition they bring, they bring something else. Each of these 19 people brings along with their joy and deep faith, they bring their scars and wounds: grief and sorrows,

disappointments and heart aches that have shaped them. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, these hard things have grown them, shaped them into the people they are today. Don't worry: we *won't* ask them to show us their scars when they come up here in a few moments 😊. Yet I am today, raising up their scars as gifts, In light of today's gospel story. When Jesus showed his startled, terrified, doubtful besties his hands and feet. And invited them to touch him. Saying, "yes, this is really me." And yes, "I too, share your wounds, your pain. And yours, too, can be transformed into new life."

Jesus was not only proving that in fact God had really raised him from the dead, and that he was not a ghost or a hologram of himself. (A conspiracy theory raging by the time Luke was written in the late First Century, that Jesus was not *really* raised bodily from the grave.) Jesus was teaching them and us that *healing and hope flow from our wounds, too*. That real compassion, the ever widening of our hearts and our world view come most readily through pain. The deepening of our souls and understanding, from the depth of our wounds. Beloved community: We are children of God. All of us bear God's image, wounds, and all. This is what we all share. Along with that marvelous sun in the sky upon which we all depend. Yup, the one that was eclipsed by the moon last Monday.

As we heard in 1 John, "Who knows how we'll end up!" We can't know—and we don't need to know. What we do know is that we are children of God. And we are Easter people. Right here and right now. This is our identity, our purpose, our grounding. Taking our cue from both of our scripture lessons: our Eastered eyes are opened to Christ within and among us, calling us to act with justice, love tenderly, serve one another, and to walk humbly with God. We do that better, together. We will do that better after today: with these nine new members, and our ten newly elected officers. Together we can become deeper and wiser as we go. Bolder and more committed to do the impossible in the name of Jesus: Like eradicating the sin of systemic poverty and dismantling the sin of systemic racism and white supremacy: sins that intersect and are killing us literally as well as metaphorically. Our Matthew 25 vision needs *their* oars in the troubled waters of our times, powering and guiding our boat we call FPC.

Sebastian, age 11, after viewing the total eclipse from Houlton, Maine, declared, "I would pay a million dollars to see that again." Friends, look and see God's wounded hand lead us, (no eclipse glasses needed) from total darkness, from sin and evil in us and in the world into the radiant light of healing and restoration. For us and our broken world. Beginning from where we are. I will close with part of the prayer by Walter Brueggemann<sup>i</sup> titled, "Easter Us." Let us pray:

*You God who terrified the waters,  
 who crashed your thunder,  
 who shook the earth, and  
 scared the wits out of chaos.  
 You God who with strong arm saved your people  
 by miracle and wonder and majestic act.  
 You are the same God to whom we turn,  
 in our days of trouble,*

*and in our weary nights...*  
*Look upon us, in our deep need,*  
*mark the wounds of our siblings just here,*  
*notice the turmoil in our lives, and the lives of our families,*  
*credit the incongruity of the rich and the poor in our very city,*  
*and the staggering injustices abroad in our land,*  
*tend to the rage out of control, rage justified by displacement,*  
*rage gone crazy by absence, silence, and deprivation,*  
*measure the suffering,*  
*count the sufferers,*  
*number the wounds.*  
*You tamer of chaos and mender of all tears in the canvas of creation,*  
*we ponder your suffering,*  
*your crown of thorns,*  
*your garment taken in lottery,*  
*your mocked life,*  
*and now we throw upon your suffering humiliation, the suffering of the world.*  
*You defeater of death, whose power could not hold you,*  
*come in your Easter,*  
*come in your sweeping victory,*  
*come in your glorious new life.*  
*Easter us,*  
*salve wounds,*  
*break injustice,*  
*bring peace,*  
*guarantee neighbor,*  
*Easter us in joy and strength.*  
*Be our God, be your true self, lord of life,*  
*massively turn our life toward your life*  
*and away from our anti-neighbor, anti-self deathliness.*  
*Hear our thankful, grateful, unashamed Hallelujah! Amen.*

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<sup>i</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann*, (Fortress Press: Minneapolis, MN, 2003), pp. 165-166, excerpts.