

St. Thomas's Episcopal Parish
Newark, DE
The Third Sunday of Easter – April 30, 2017/Year A
Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Psalm 116:1-3, 10-17; 1 Peter 1:17-23; Luke 24:13-35
The Reverend Paul W. Gennett, Jr.

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May my words reveal the greater glory of God in our risen Lord Jesus Christ.
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Most every town has a store in which there is nothing but lamps, hundreds and sometimes thousands of lamps. Some are antique, some are new, some are plain, and some are ornate. Some of them are unplugged while others are showcasing their light. One day a little girl was shopping for new lamps with her mother. When asked which lamps she liked best, she answered, **“I like best the ones where the light shines out.”**

This is no less true of us in our churches and our present-day witness to the Risen Christ. How well do our lives **showcase our light**? Who is being attracted to this light, being nourished by it, letting it penetrate and empower their lives? Macrina Wiederkehr, in her book *Seven Sacred Pauses*, writes of the pilgrims on the road to Emmaus: **“When their eyes were opened they recognized the One who journeyed with them on their pilgrimage so full of questions ... ‘Were not our hearts burning within us?’ Using slightly different words, this same question is displayed on the icon of the Emmaus journey that sits on my small altar: ‘Were not our hearts gradually catching fire?’**

Eastertide is all about living OUR resurrection. So perhaps the response of Cleopas and companion might be heard for us – **What is our heartburn like today?**

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Cleopas and his unnamed companion walk slowly along the dusty road to Emmaus. About seven miles west from Jerusalem, they walk away from the holy city into the fading light of a sad yet confusing day. The image gives rise to their shaky faith about all the events of the past days – the crucifixion and death of Jesus, and now this. **But what was this?**

They are not entirely without faith as this “stranger” appears alongside. They invite him to join their conversation about all that has happened still bears some hope within them, perhaps the space of **maybe this could be true**, the possibility that their hope and faith in the one **they gave their hearts** still resides.

As the “stranger” Jesus walks alongside, he begins to deal with their **cardiac arrest** in three ways:

- Jesus first attends to their **wounded heart**. They walk away into the darkening day, away from the other disciples, with as much wonder and heartache as Thomas – *“But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.”* Still not seeing Jesus before them, they speak in the **past tense**, the most heart breaking words and sounds one can make. They continue to say aloud all that had happened for the hours along that dusty road. They consider possibilities, argue facts, and try to make sense about the empty tomb. They say, **“It seems so impossible, but maybe ... perhaps ...”** Floating in their sea of doubt is the hope for the Jesus as God’s chosen to really, really be alive again. **“It seems so impossible, but maybe ... perhaps ...”**
- Jesus then engages with them, and their **beating heart** begins to revive – *“Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us.”* The tiniest of “blips” appears on the monitor of their faith. The body of their Beloved One was gone, and something about *“... 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.”* The “blips” grow a little stronger, yet that shadow of doubt remains darkening their hearts like the lengthening shadows of the day’s end. So Jesus applies **spiritual paddles** to jump start their aching, doubting, wounded hearts. Although still not recognizable to their grieving eyes, Jesus slowly massages their hearts by telling them **THE** story of their faith life.
- Jesus finally emerges in their **burning hearts**. Something about this stranger led them to invite him to stay for supper and rest in their home. And just as the table fellowship with the disciples at the Passover meal, Jesus *“took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.”* The lifeless past tense heart talk is now gone as they enter this new future as promised of God’s kingdom come **THROUGH THEM** – *“That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together ... they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.”*

Hospitality and Fellowship ... Word and Sacrament. All the ways Jesus is present with us then, and with us now, in the times of cardiac care for our waning faith. It happens to be what we do best, around **THIS** table of faith, perfectly imperfect disciples that we are today. It continues by living **INTO** this faith each and every day. This is the clearest meaning of what it means to be **the Church**.

What is our heartburn like today?

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There is a contemporary Christian song that I used to sing with others at the closing of spiritual renewal weekends I had been active with in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. The refrain went like this ...

**Have you seen Jesus my Lord
He's here in plain view
Take a look open your eyes
He'll show it to you.**

There is a story about visitors to a world class heavy-duty grease production factory. The visitors were ushered into a large room where a tour guide told them the company history and proudly talked about the employees at work producing the best machine lubricants in the world. The visitors toured the factory and observed lots of machinery whirling, mixing, and packaging. As the tour ended, one of the visitors said, "I didn't see a shipping department in the factory." The guide responded, "Well, we don't have a shipping department, because it takes all the grease we produce to lubricate our own equipment and keep the wheels turning." How sad yet how much like the life of faith and the church can become. Just keeping our own wheels churning is not what we are about in living our resurrection faith, about being a people of the Jesus Movement, and the Church.

The Risen Christ is here among us! While it gives us comfort and encouragement to know that we are not alone, **it is not just for us**. It is for *the world* that he has come, that Jesus dwells with us and to all whom we show the light of our heartburn.

What is our heartburn like today?

AMEN