

“EASTER IN JEOPARDY”
Luke 24:13-35 Easter 2023

One of the longest running game shows of all time is **Jeopardy**, which is currently in its 39th season and has over 8,000 episodes under its belt. The show was created by Merv Griffin and first debuted on NBC on March 30, 1964. Of course, one cannot think about **Jeopardy** without connecting it with its host of 35 years, the late Alex Trebek.

I don't watch Jeopardy all the time, but I do enjoy catching it every now and then. Well, to be honest, I both enjoy and don't enjoy Jeopardy. The problem I have with Jeopardy is it shows me how much I do not know. Every now and then there is a category I can blaze through. There are some groups that I could get the answer, if given more time than the contestants have. And then there are those categories like French literature, when I might as well just pull the plug. I'm clueless. **I just don't know.**

Jeopardy aside, have you ever considered how much we don't know about Easter? The 4 Gospels have varying details about the event, and the oldest versions of Mark leave any resurrection appearance of Jesus himself out. The book of Acts tells us Jesus appeared to the disciples for 40 days after he was raised, but the details are rather sketchy. Here is the most important event in the history of humankind.

Don't you think we would know more?

Speaking of not knowing, look at our Road to Emmaus passage. This is a resurrection day story. Yet, we don't know who these two disciples are. One is named but not the other and they are mentioned nowhere else in scripture. They are traveling to a place called Emmaus and we don't know where Emmaus was.

Apparently, it was such a small no nothing site that no one bothered to put it on a map. Plus, we don't know why these two disciples are traveling to Emmaus in the

first place. The irony of the story is they are talking about Jesus, but they don't know him when he joins them.

Jesus asks them what Cleopas and his friend are talking about and Cleopas replies, “**Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who DOES NOT KNOW the things that have taken place there these days?**” Jesus simply replies, “What things?” These disciples give a brief run down of events, which we recognize as Luke's summary of the gospel story. This summary ends with the disciples basically admitting they **don't know** why Jesus had to **die**, they **don't know** about these **he's alive reports**, and they **don't know what to do** now.

And just to complete our list of unknowns, if we jump to the end of the passage, we are told Simon Peter has seen the risen Christ, yet that story is never told in the gospels. Here is the number one disciple and we are told nothing about what sounds like a private resurrection Easter experience. My point is, there is a lot we just **don't know** about Easter, the event we base our faith upon. And yet, I think we know enough to believe in the resurrected Jesus?

I. BY REVELATION ON THE WAY

My wife and I enjoy hiking together. Aside from the health benefits of moving, breathing in fresh air, and having time with each other, what I appreciate about hiking is the opportunity to be surprised by the world around me. You never know what you're going to encounter along the trail. You might hear different bird calls, see beautiful patterns in nature like spider webs, come across flowing waterfalls, odd shaped trees, colorful mushrooms, and some scurrying animals.

There are surprises around each twist in the road. But here's the truth. The only way one is going to discover and enjoy them is by walking the trail and paying attention and allowing yourself to be captured by creation.

I think Easter faith works like that too. Did you notice these two disciples don't recognize Jesus as the stranger who joins them. One commentator suggested

the reason for this is they were walking west, and the sun was in their eyes. Sorry that excuse never worked for me in sports, let alone faith. Yet, by the end the trail, they say to one another, **“Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the ROAD, while he was opening scriptures to us?”** Here's my theory. I think their lack of recognition is attributed to a heart condition. They were not yet prepared to receive the risen Lord. Perhaps faith is something that reveals itself along the way.

The problem with living in a world of computers and instant answers is both life and faith aren't going to be discovered that way. Faith isn't something you receive in front of a screen or a YouTube video. Faith is something that is discovered along the way. Interestingly, the early Christians were known as the **people of the Way**.

Faith is a journey in which God reveals God's self a little at a time. Quite frankly, it would be too overwhelming for most of us if God suddenly showed up in all his power, glory, and strength. Faith is not something we are coerced into nor figure out, but rather the resurrected Jesus graciously revealing himself usually when people are seeking him. We catch glimpses as pilgrims on the journey.

II. AT THE TABLE

In a beloved soliloquy from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the title character holds in his hand the skull of a long-deceased friend. Hamlet muses: **“Alas, poor Yorick, I knew him well, Horatio.”** When Hamlet says of the court jester, Yorick, “I knew him well,” he captures the same sort of depth knowledge that transcends mere acquaintance. Hamlet's monologue is so poignant because the jester Yorick was a man the troubled Danish prince deeply loved and admired.

Easter faith is known through our deep love for Jesus and for others. It comes through the hospitality we extend to the world. When the three travelers in our story reach a restaurant in Emmaus, they invite the veiled Jesus to eat with them. He acts

like he is walking on. But they urged him strongly, saying, **“Stay with us, because it is almost evening, and the day is now nearly over.”**

This is an example of a Middle Eastern hospitality exchange. The invitation is given, then refusal, then second given again, and then accepted. These disciples wanted to spend more time with Jesus. They want to know him better. But when the bread was brought to the table, Jesus took the bread, blessed the Bread, broke the bread, and gave the bread to them. Obviously, this is a reference to Lord’s Supper, and perhaps indicates Cleopas and friend were there. **“Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight.”**

We get to know the resurrected Christ in the hospitality that we extend to others. Jesus said, “What you do for the least of these you have done unto me.” We come to know Jesus through the face of others we invite into our lives. By listening, compassion, working with, serving, and loving others we begin to see the face of Christ all around us. We experience that peace which passes all understanding. Easter knowing is found in this profound loving, and taking the risk to invite another in. It is at the table of deep fellowship, shared life, we know the resurrected Christ.

III. AS SHARE THE JOY WITH OTHERS

These two disciples are suddenly filled with joy and new hope. They are so excited at knowing the risen Christ that they walk, and perhaps run all the way back to Jerusalem to share their discovery with the 11 and the other disciples. According to the passage they walked 14 miles, just for reference, and in the dark. We don’t know for sure why they left in the first place. Perhaps they left Jerusalem out of fear of the authority’s further persecution. Maybe the Passover was over, and they began their trip home, thinking the Jesus movement was finished. Or perhaps they are so distraught, they wanted to distance themselves from the pain of the cross. We don’t know their motives. What we do know, is that upon encountering the risen Christ everything changed. Their courage, their energy, their hope is reignited, and they

can't keep it to themselves. They share it first with other believers who themselves have a story to tell.

The Church is the place where we encourage one another, where we come to know Christ together. But my friends, it is not the last place. Don't let the story end inside these four walls. There is a whole world in need of hope, good news, and everlasting joy. People desperately need the revelation of a risen Lord. They need a people who are willing to journey with them, to show divine hospitality, and who aren't afraid to say I know the one you are looking for. Will we be those people?

Easter is not about knowing all the details about Jesus or the event. Its about knowing the risen Christ. That happens along the way. Amen.

First Presbyterian Church in Hawley
Sunday, April 9, 2023
Second Scripture Lesson

Luke 24:13-35

¹³Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then 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?" ¹⁹He 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, ²⁰and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹But 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. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and 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. ²⁴Some 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." ²⁵Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. ²⁸As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹But 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. ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They 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?" ³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be To God.