

Welcome

P: Welcome Church in Exile and thank you for gathering on this Third Sunday of Easter, April the 26th, 2020. We gather via video in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, amen.

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you.

P: He is risen!

C: He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Prayer of the Day

Let's pray... O God, your Son makes himself known to all his disciples in the breaking of bread. Open the eyes of our faith, that we may see him in his redeeming work. We pray in the Name of the one who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

First Reading: Acts 2:14a, 36-41

^{14a}Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed [the crowd], ³⁶“Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

³⁷Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” ³⁸Peter 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. ³⁹For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” ⁴⁰And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

Psalm: Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19

¹I love the LORD, who has | heard my voice, and listened to my supplication,
²**for the LORD has given ear to me whenever I called.**

³The cords of death entangled me; the anguish of the grave came upon me; I came to grief and sorrow.

⁴**Then I called upon the name of the LORD: “O LORD, I pray you, save my life.”**

¹²How shall I repay the LORD for all the good things God has done for me?

¹³**I will lift the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD.**

¹⁴I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all God’s people.

¹⁵**Precious in your sight, O LORD, is the death of your servants.**

¹⁶O LORD, truly I am your servant; I am your servant, the child of your handmaid; you have freed me from my bonds.

¹⁷**I will offer you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call upon the name of the LORD.**

¹⁸I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all God’s people,

¹⁹**in the courts of the LORD’s house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem.
Hallelujah!**

Second Reading: 1 Peter 1:17-23

¹⁷If 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. ¹⁸You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. ²⁰He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. ²¹Through 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.

²²Now 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. ²³You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.

The Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke, the 24th Chapter.

Gospel: Luke 24:13-35

¹³Now on that same day [when Jesus had appeared to Mary Magdalene,] two [disciples] 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.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

It's Hard to Believe

Scripture: Luke 24:13-35

I love to watch Disney movies, do you? One of my favorite Disney movies is "Now You See Him, Now You Don't". It's a funny movie about a college student who developed a secret formula that you could spray on things, even people, and make them disappear. In the movie, a gang of crooks tries to steal the formula to help them rob banks. It is a very funny movie.

Of course, there is no secret formula that can make things invisible, but there is an event in the Bible where Jesus made himself appear and disappear right in front of two of his disciples. It is a really interesting story and every bit of it is true!

After Jesus was crucified and had risen from the dead, his followers were very sad and confused. They didn't know what was going to happen next. One day two of Jesus' followers were walking to the town by the name of Emmaus. As they walked along, Jesus came and began walking with them, but God kept them from recognizing him.

As they walked, they discussed all of the things that had happened. As they came near to Emmaus, it was late in the day, so they asked the stranger who had been walking with them to stay the night with them. So, Jesus went to their home. As they sat down to eat, Jesus took the bread and blessed it and gave it to them to eat. Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. At that very moment, he disappeared!

The two followers went back to Jerusalem and found the eleven disciples and others who had gathered with them. They told them the story about how Jesus had appeared to them as they traveled to Emmaus and how they had recognized him as he was breaking bread. Just as they were telling them about it, Jesus himself appeared and stood among them. The whole group was frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost!

"Why are you frightened?" Jesus asked. "Look at my hands and feet. You can see that it is really me. Touch me and be assured that I am not a ghost."

Isn't that a wonderful story? Would you like for Jesus to reveal himself to you? Well, Jesus still reveals himself to his followers today, but he does it through his Word and the Holy Spirit. He may not appear to you in the same way he did to the disciples in our Bible lesson today, but if you study the Bible and do the things Jesus said to do, like being kind to others, helping people who need some help, and

taking care of the world God created, Jesus will reveal himself to you. Jesus also comes to us when we break bread together during Holy Communion. I know we are all missing our worship time when we can gather together to experience the living Jesus, but it won't be too much longer until we can be together again. Until that time you can still get to see a bit of Jesus when you follow his commandments.

Let's pray... Our Father, help us to study your Word and to apply it in our daily life. Open our eyes with the gift of faith so we can see Jesus in acts of kindness and love. Lord Jesus, we want to see you and in your precious name we pray, amen.

And now for our sermon message for today...

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our constant traveling companion along the way, Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.

On August 9, 2010, Ed Stafford plunged into the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Brazil to cool off, pop open some champagne, and celebrate. Other sunbathing tourists on the beach might have seen him as just another crazy Brit who soaked up a little too much South American sun. Stafford would say he was, a little bit crazy in a "Indiana Jones, intrepid explorer, boldly going where no one has gone-before kind of crazy. When Stafford's toes hit the surf that morning, he officially became the first man to ever walk the entire length of the Amazon River. His two-year, 4,200 mile trek took him through some of the most dangerous terrain on earth. Stafford and his companion, Peruvian forestry worker Gadiel "Cho" Sanchez Rivera, braved deadly snakes, 18-foot crocodiles, exotic tropical diseases, hostile natives and the daily potential of disaster to complete the trek entirely by walking through the rain forest and not using boats, or any other motorized vehicles as other expeditions had done.

"I've been told I was going to be killed so many times," the 34-year-old former British army captain told the Associated Press. "But I'm not dead yet! I've proved if you want something enough, you can do anything!" The day before, Stafford had collapsed on the side of a road just 53 miles short of the finish, but he rallied after a few hours of rest to push through to the end, having enough energy to make his run into the surf.

Why did he do it, you ask? Stafford is quick to tell you he's not an eco-warrior out to prove a point about the devastating deforestation of the Amazon's rain forest; although he hopes his journey raised awareness and that something

good can be done to preserve what he saw firsthand every day for two years. Rather, it was a personal challenge for a man who left the military to be a stockbroker, but got bored by the drudgery of finance. “The crux of it is this,” he said about his quest. “I am simply doing it because no one has done it before.”

Stafford started his trek on April 2, 2008, on the southern coast of Peru. He survived on beans and rice and on the piranhas he caught in the river. He was also able to buy provisions in villages he encountered along the way, many of which welcomed him. Some, however, were a bit less than hospitable. At one stop, Stafford and Cho were confronted by another group of natives who were very distrustful of outsiders. The natives captured the two adventurers and brought them before the village elders. After a lot of scrutiny and a strong scolding, they were let go and continued on their way.

Such a dangerous trek makes news today not only because it’s quite a feat, but because unlike our pre-automobile, pre-airline ancestors, we’re generally not used to walking very far. Smart watches and other wearable technology enable us to track how many steps we take each day. They even allow you to set a goal and will nag you when you go for too long without reaching your goal. Despite all this, just thinking about a two-year hike is more than a bit of a stretch.

People in the ancient world likely would have seen Stafford’s trek as impressive because of the danger, but not all that unusual in terms of the distance. Jesus was himself an epic walker, according to the gospels. There’s actually a person, by the name of Cari Haus who says Jesus traveled mind-boggling distances on foot, especially for those of us who are used to traveling while seated. Here’s a few stats:

- As a young boy Jesus, walked about 400 miles with his parents during their return from Egypt to Nazareth.
- Every devout male in Galilee would travel to Jerusalem three times a year for religious festivals, which meant a 240-mile round trip from Nazareth. If Jesus followed this pattern every year between the ages of 5 and 30, he would have walked 18,000 miles in trips to Jerusalem alone (3 x 240 x 25).
- According to the Gospels, Jesus traveled 3,125 miles in his three-year public ministry. His disciples would have walked many of those miles with him.
- All totaled, a conservative estimate of the distance Jesus walked during his lifetime was 21,525 miles. That’s a lot of sandals!

Stafford’s long walk allowed him experience things most people fly over and forget. Jesus’ lifetime of long walks allowed him the opportunity to see faces,

hear stories, experience the hospitality of strangers and feel the connection between the land and its people. Jesus led his disciples on a journey giving them the best kind of laboratory for learning what God was doing through Jesus' own ministry and their part in it. We might call it "ministry by walking around."

The seven-mile stretch from Jerusalem to Emmaus was one of the most significant parts of the faith journey for two of the disciples of Jesus, according to Luke. One named Cleopas and an unnamed other, are walking away from the disaster of Good Friday and the bewilderment of Easter. Luke doesn't tell us why Emmaus is their destination. Are they fleeing to a hiding place, to the safety of family, or simply a way to process all that had happened? Most of the other disciples decided to hunker down in the upper room and stay put in Jerusalem, but these two kept walking, and the risen Jesus, still walking, joins them on the road.

Jesus comes to them as a stranger who joins them on the way, much like those strangers who fell into step with Stafford on his journey along the Amazon. He is a traveling companion for a time and gets in on their idle conversation. "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" He asks. Cleopas wonders if their fellow traveler has been living in a cave for the last several days and goes on to tell him the story of what happened to Jesus of Nazareth, from their hope about him as "the one to redeem Israel" to his tragic crucifixion and the wonder of the empty tomb. They had walked with Jesus on at least some of those 3,125 miles, and all that time they thought they were moving toward a promised destination. With the death of their Messiah, now they're just walking with no purpose in mind. As the stranger walks with them on this road to nowhere, he tells them about the longer journey they'd all been on. Starting with the journey of God's people from liberation in Egypt under Moses to the time of the prophets and through all the signs along the way, Jesus walked them through God's plan for his people and his own death and resurrection as both a destination and a new beginning. The two disciples invite this stranger to stay with them and, when sitting at table together, they suddenly recognize it's the risen Jesus they've been walking with all along. Jesus disappears, but they start walking back to Jerusalem and into a new future. Emmaus wasn't their finish line after all. It turned out to be just another stop on the journey of following the Lord.

In my time as a Christian I've noticed we're at our best when walking with Jesus. If there's anything the Emmaus Road story teaches us, it's that the disciples of Jesus are at their best when they keep walking with him. Discipleship is never a drive-by or fly-by process, in which we can look for instant results and ignore the people and places we whiz by every day. Disciples of Jesus recognize their lives are a journey of following Jesus and learning from him even as we look for him in

the faces of strangers who join us along the way. Disciples are willing to follow Jesus despite the dangers and potential pitfalls, and they offer hospitality to others as we seek, welcome, and serve all people, but especially those who may not yet recognize Jesus. Disciples also know they can't walk the journey alone. Intrepid explorer Stafford needed Cho at his side to finish. Jesus sent his disciples out two by two and it was two who traveled together on the road to Emmaus. Discipleship is a long-haul process, and we all need each other another along the way.

Stafford finished his long walk with a dip in the water. We begin our journey with Jesus when we're splashed with the waters of baptism. We also need spiritual nourishment along the way, which the breaking of bread in the Eucharist offers us. No matter where we live and move in the world, it's Jesus who leads us, provides for us, and walks beside us. May we never lose sight of the one who leads us! Even in the isolation of sheltering at home and social distancing when out and about, we are blessed because we have the risen Lord Jesus Christ in the body and the blood of Holy Communion and in the Spirit dwelling within us. May Jesus walk ever closer to you during this time of isolation giving you His peace and the hope for tomorrow only He can provide. Amen.

P: We respond to God's Word by confessing our faith using the words of the Nicene Creed. (If you don't know the words, just pray them along with me...):

C: We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen

Uplifted by the promised hope of healing and resurrection, we join the people of God in all times and places in praying for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

We pray for those whose hearts are burning within for the love for your gospel. Empower us to tell the story of your love in our lives and to show hospitality in response to your love. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

We pray for the diverse natural world: for the rain forest of South America, prairies, forests, valleys, mountains, and for all the wild and endangered animals who call these spaces home. Empower all people to make certain they are nurtured and protected. Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

We pray for the world. Bring an end to poverty and disease, especially the Covid 19 virus that is devastating the lives and economy of so many peoples. Restrain

the nations from fighting over limited resources. Redeem us from the cycles of scarcity and violence. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We pray for all who call upon your healing name. Give us rest and peace. Stay with us, and walk with all who are hungry, friendless, despairing, and desiring healing in mind, body, and spirit. We pray for all those whom we name aloud before your throne of mercy and for those we keep in the silence of our hearts.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We pray for the faith forming ministries of this church. Give us the self-discipline to study your Word with those in our household as we shelter at home. Bring this time of isolation to an end quickly so we can get back to learning your Word in Sunday School, Confirmation, and other Bible studies. Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Create in our hearts a yearning to rest in your promise of eternal and resurrected life. We praise you for the gift of faith that gives us the hope of new life with you as we lift thankful hearts for all those who now have eternal rest in your care.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

With bold confidence in your love, almighty God, we trust all for whom we pray into the mercy of your infinite love. We pray all these things and whatever else you know we need in the blessed Name of Jesus Christ our Savior and our Lord.

Amen.

SHARING OF THE PEACE

P: During our time of Exile, we share the peace with one another in a slightly different way. As I share the peace of Christ with you, I ask you to pick at least one person each day this week to personally share the peace of the Lord. Please remember to keep your socially acceptable distance, but you can still call them or send a card, or an email. I recommend a personal call because your voice might be the high point of their day! One person each day isn't a lot to ask, but it will keep us united while were apart. So, I'll start us off...

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

P: The living Lord Jesus Christ is our tie that binds us together, let us pray as He taught his disciples.....

C: **Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

May the One who brought forth Jesus from the dead raise you to new life, fill you with hope, and turn your mourning into dancing. Almighty God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

P: In everything you do, go in Christ's Love.

C: **Seeking, welcoming, and serving all. Amen!**