

Two weeks ago, we celebrated the Sunday of the resurrection, commonly referred to as Easter. Actually, “Easter” is not a Sunday, it is a season – a fifty day celebration of the resurrection that lasts from Easter Sunday to the Sunday of Pentecost when we commemorate the birth of the Church. In the season of Easter, we are called to examine what the resurrection means for us – collectively and individually. What impact does the empty tomb have upon us? How does the fact that Jesus is alive affect our daily lives? What is Easter all about? What does Easter mean – to me – where I am – in the 21<sup>st</sup> highly scientific, modern and sophisticated society in which we all live in today? These are the questions that we are left to struggle with and meditate on in the days and weeks of the Easter season as well as our entire lives in the Church.

On Easter Sunday, I talked about the meaning of Easter. Basically, the meaning of Easter relies largely on how one reacts to the empty tomb. For some, the empty tomb merely a curiosity – a topic for speculative thought and debate – “what happened to Jesus?” Was his body stolen? Was he really dead in the first place or did he simply faint and then revive in the coolness of the rock tomb? Was the whole thing a hoax in the first place?

Perhaps this is the very place that we find our two travelers on the road to Emmaus from today’s scripture that I just read. Two travelers, on their way back

home after the Passover celebration in Jerusalem. The story let's us know that this is the very afternoon of Easter Sunday. The story also cues us into the fact that these two are noticeably sad and dejected. Why? In the conversation that we overhear them having with the yet unnamed person that joins them that day, we learn that they are dejected because the one that they hoped would be the savior of all Israel had been crucified and killed. Right in verse 21 Cleopas says "but we had hoped that he was the one who redeem Israel." The implication is that at least Cleopas believes that he, that is Jesus, was not the one because now he's dead. Not only that – but they are astonished that some of the women of the group had come from the tomb telling them that Jesus was not there and that they had a vision of Angels that told them that Jesus had been raised.

Although the story does not come out and expressly say this, we get the idea that these two travelers think that the women are full of poppycock – that they must be mistaken or maybe they are victim of some hysterical hallucination. For the two, the resurrection is not what it seems, there must be some other rational, logical and (dare I say it Ken Graham?) scientific explanation to what has happened. Why else would they be leaving Jerusalem in defeat – going home back to their normal, everyday lives?

Have you ever been there? Have you ever been in the place where these two (at least Cleopas because he does most of the talking) find themselves? It is not unchristian to have some doubts now and again regarding this whole resurrection business. I know that there are times in my own life when everything that I believe about God and Jesus and how I fit into the entire scheme of the universe seems all a bit too over the top – a bit more than I can comprehend – a bit more than I can believe.

I mean, at times I really have to wonder, how can all this be? How can it be that God is so concerned about me that God would go through everything that God went through just so that I wouldn't have to spend a moment apart from God's presence in my life? Does God really care that much about me? I mean, God has some pretty big things to care about in the vastness of creation – how do I rank among those big ticket items – I am just one insignificant person in a sea of people who have bigger problems than I do and certainly bigger needs than I have.

It is hard for me to get my head around the reality of the resurrection and what it means for me. So I really can't be too hard on these weary pilgrims to Jerusalem who came to celebrate Passover and were swept up in a story that they hardly expected to unfold right before their very eyes. I know what it is to be filled with

doubt and uncertainty – even when there is evidence right in front of me, evidence that should fill me with hope and security.

So, what is Easter for these two? What does Easter mean for them? Well, at the outset of the story – **I would have to say that Easter was a big, resounding disappointment.** It happened – Jesus was dead, not in the tomb – but dead, and they were going to get back to what they had always been doing – go back to work, go back home, blah, blah, blah. Not too unlike what many people do after Sunday worship – nice service but what does it have to do with me?

Well, Easter is not just the empty tomb – if it were we would be with all those who are looking for some “other” explanation for it. **What does Easter mean – well, first and foremost Easter is for YOU – Easter is all about you!** The story of the road to Emmaus, thankfully, does not end with these two weary travelers voicing lament of the goings on of the last three days. Instead, it contains a powerful witness to what Easter is all about. Easter was all about those two travelers just like its all about you and me. **In the midst of what we all could argue is natural doubt and disappointment – Jesus shows up – not to condemn, not to accuse, not to point out fault (although he does get a little harsh with them) but to open their eyes and their hearts to what is really going on here.**

In the pages of scripture, in the breaking of the bread of fellowship and community – Jesus opens up the eyes of those who cannot see and allows them to behold reality. This is not the reality of science or logic or reason. This is the reality of God’s active presence in their lives. The reality that God really cares about you and me and everyone else’s for that matter. The reality that God is all around us and we can see God and feel God’s presence if we are willing to take the time to look for God in, with and under the space and the people and the circumstances around us.

Easter is all about YOU. It happened for you. As hard as that might be for anyone of us to believe and understand, it is true. There are as many other things in life that are hard to believe and yet we believe them. This is one, God really, really cares that much for each one of us that God was willing to go through all of the things that God went through so that we could live our lives knowing that we are loved, we are accepted, we are cherished by God. The resurrection is all about you! It is salvation for eternity and it is a better, more excellent way of living for today. Because we know that God loves us, because we have experienced God total and undeserved acceptance of who we are – we have a path, a destiny, a purpose – and that is what gives our lives meaning and purpose and fulfillment –today.

In the words of scripture and in the breaking of the bread life and sharing the cup of salvation, our eyes can be opened just like those two traveler's eyes were after they had reached their home in Emmaus. When we gather around God's word, when we kneel side-by-side for communion, we see Jesus and the Easter message that all of this was done for you can once again enter into our lives and continue to affect who we are, what we do and how we relate to one another in God's name. Amen.