



Columbia, Missouri
The Worship of God • April 17, 2022
Easter Sunday



THE SCRIPTURE
Luke 24:13-35

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. Then 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?" He 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, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But 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. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and 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. 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." Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But 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. When

he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They 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?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

THE MESSAGE
"Sacred Rhythms: D.B.R."
Mark Briley

Christ is risen! [*Christ is risen, indeed!*]. Do you think so? It's wild, isn't it? I mean we're all sitting here together – there's lots of pastel colors, and your grandma is so proud that you're all here today. So that's good, right?

I'm excited for sure. I've been serving alongside of you for two-and-a-half years now, and I've never been in this space for Easter Sunday. I'm a little giddy about the whole thing. A buddy sent me a text for my birthday a couple weeks back saying that we should, "*Wake up every day with the zeal and excitement of an elementary school kid who has a field trip that day!*"

This is field trip day, friends, and Christ is risen! [*Christ is risen, indeed!*]. Do you *really* think so? I mean there's COVID, and war, and allergies, and frustrating jobs, and inflation, and annoying habits that people have that you wish didn't bother you, but they just do so very much. Risen indeed?

It's okay to wonder. And... it's important to remember that resurrection only comes because a death and burial preceded it. Field trip day has some potholes for the school bus to maneuver after all. But you're on the Easter bus today and we'll see if we can't navigate it together.

I could really use your help with the message today. I tried this kind of thing once at a General Assembly – the every-other-year gathering of our denomination across the United States and Canada. The powers that be gave me the microphone one night before the masses in the Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines, and the crowd was ready to shout. So, I introduced them to the title of today's Easter message: D.B.R. – *Death. Burial. Resurrection.*

Now I know this abbreviation and initials nonsense can get confusing. My wife worked in the insurance field for the better part of a decade, and she'd be throwing out all

these FLAs and TPS reports and GT3s and BWs at home, and I never knew what she was talking about. DBR – “*You expect me to remember that?*” And it’s not DMB – or *Dave Matthew’s Band*, and it’s not PBR which is??? *Professional Bull Riders*, or is it *Pabst Blue Ribbon*? Any case – DBR is *Death. Burial. Resurrection*. It’s Easter in this sanctuary for the first time three years, and I want you to participate in its power. So, help me out, would you?

Starting over here... this section and all the way over... you’re going to be *Death*. Nothing personal... you seem like a lovely section, but somebody’s got to carry this load. And the fine people in this section over here... all the way to the back... you’re going to be *Burial*. My condolences. But we need you to own this part. It’s critically important to the whole thing, too. Those of you here in the middle... all the way back... you’ve got *Resurrection*. And you already like your part I can tell. When I point to your section, would you be so kind to represent your word by saying it out loud in unison. Bring a little feeling if you would. If I give you a big gesture (*I’m already in trouble*) could you bring it back at me with some heat? And if I’m more gentle or somber, maybe you could match that spirit, too. Let’s try. ... Okay, great. Let’s get on with this Easter thing. You’re going to launch this for us.

[*Death*]. [*Burial*.] ... Rigor mortis. Now wait a minute – that’s not the ‘*R*’ we agreed to, right? Rigor mortis? Rigor mortis is the third stage of death, you know. It’s the worst... or so I can imagine. The joints and muscles stiffen. I’m told it’s a process that lasts one to four days.

This Emmaus story in Luke’s Gospel falls on the third day following the [*death*] and [*burial*] of Jesus. Jesus is up... he’s been raised! ... but that rigor mortis is no joke. The text says he comes upon a couple of people on the road to Emmaus from Jerusalem which is a seven-mile stretch. So, we know the first thing Jesus does after the resurrection is go for a little run. How do you shake off the rigor mortis rust? You stretch really well; do a few lunges, and you fire up a motivational playlist on your phone for a good run – you know -- to work out the stiffness. Can you imagine Jesus’ play list? We’ll call it his [*resurrection*] play list. Maybe a little John Denver, a little Sasha Fierce, Lauren Daigle’s “*Still Rolling Stones*” perhaps? ... maybe Jodeci’s – “*Gotta Get on Up!*”

Jesus runs up on these two slow moving, gloomy walkers hollering, “*On your right! On your right!*” because you know, I’m guessing Jesus paces at about a seven-minute mile on a shakeout run. But as he passes, he can tell they’re having some “*heated fellowship*” – some intensity in their conversation – so he pulls out his ear buds and is pacing backwards now as he faces them to ask, “*What’s all the gloom about, friends?*” A little annoyed with this runner, who is clearly out of the loop, they say, “*Have you been living under a rock, dude?*” Jesus kind of just smirks and nods his head a bit. I

mean, that's pretty much the case for the past couple of days. And then they hit him with the news: [death]; [burial]. "Jesus the Nazarene. We thought he was the one, but you know, it's been three days, rigor mortis and all."

These two are in a funk... something I think many of us have been in for the better part of the last couple of years. We thought we had something going, but life feels like we're in that third stage of death... things getting a little stiff around here. You've been uptight and you don't know why exactly. The little things just bother you more than they used to. You're a little more irritable.



A friend posted this on Face Book recently after he discovered how his kids opened the family box of frosted flakes. He posted on repeat: "Must teach kids to open cereal. Must teach kids to open cereal." Can you relate to this? There's been a lot of stress and pressure of course – there's the fighting and division and tragedies of the world, and it's all been more overwhelming than we may like to admit out loud. And so, we lived through the *Great Resignation* as people opted out of one thing in hopes of what another would bring and that led us to what some are now calling the *Great Regret* as the resignation didn't resolve all the problems and feelings of angst we've been holding. This is not universally experienced but enough so that it has a title now.

And then there's our faith and the Church – who are we now in the middle and through this new quest for meaning we are on as individuals, families, and entire generations? How are you looking at the church these days? Are you nostalgic and longing for what was, or are you hungry and eager for new expressions and connections of faith?

In our uncertainty and bewilderment like these disciples on Emmaus Road that first Easter Sunday – living out of their confusion [death] and weariness [burial] and spirit of "Who cares anymore anyway?" ... Jesus is running up behind us saying, "On your left! On your left!" and wondering why we're so grumpy, frustrated, and judgmental of each other. When Jesus gets in front of us, and we're looking him in the eye, we say to him: "Are you the only one who hasn't heard? The church is dying. Nobody really cares like

they used to. We thought this was really where it's at but really, it's all DBR: [death], [burial] and rigor mortis."

You know, there may be some things that *would* be better off dead and buried – our negativity chief among them. All this energy focused on division. Our being consumed with [death] when we know the drive of this faith is all about life. The universe is rigged in our favor, my friends. Love is an infinite resource. We've got a wide-open future if we're willing to say as the Easter church of Jesus Christ, *"Not like we always have, but in the same Spirit we've always trusted."*

Running that Emmaus Road and encountering these disappointed mall walkers, Jesus is sort of dead panned at first saying, *"Seriously? So slow of heart."* And he goes back through the whole story again – the entire faith history – Abraham and Sarah and Jacob and Rahab and Deborah and David. Along the way he names First Christian Church, Columbia, and how they birthed this church in love. [resurrection]... and he names our charter members who are cheering us forward even still.

Even this Holy Week, Glenn and Delores Geiger's daughter, Leslie, brought a gift from her folks' estate that is closing after Glenn joined the resurrection himself last year. Leslie said, *"Broadway was a second home to our family. Use this gift to do something that may bring others to feel like this is home too."* [resurrection]

Jesus went on: *"And did I tell you about that Broadway Habitat Sale? More than \$30,000 raised from trinkets and knick knacks and old t-shirts that miraculously turns into a new home for a family in need."* [resurrection].

And it's a long story, so I know Jesus mentioned a lot of other people and movements through the years, too. And maybe he named you, too? You've struggled but been redeemed along the way, too. You've wondered if you could make a difference and then you did. You wondered if you had friends who sharpened your faith... who lifted you up and who somehow gave you enough courage to be yourself and make an impact on the world together and you found some... or you became one to someone else. It ain't easy but there's been fruit. You've experienced [death] – yes. [burial] – yes. But relationships like these? Perseverance you've demonstrated? [resurrection].

We're a part of this transformational, Easter story. Every time we choose the Easter way over the ways of [death], we make the world stronger and more like Jesus fought for. And like these disciples on the way, Jesus is willing to show us again and again. It may start with seeing each other through his eyes. A little empathy would serve us well instead of the immediate judgment we throw up on each other so quickly anymore. Empathy means we love one another; fixing isn't required when it comes to empathy; agreement isn't even required.



A friend posted a picture of our latest Supreme Court Justice, Ketanji Brown Jackson and noted how he was excited for his daughters to see a woman who looked like them presiding over the most prestigious court in the land. The pictures shared were of the Justice as a child with her mom and then a

later yearbook picture that shared her aspirations. Isn't that something? But the negative comments shared on his post about wanting more evidence of her qualifications and other nastiness truly floored me.



Ketanji Brown

"I want to go into law and eventually have a judicial appointment."

Felt like such a [burial]. My friend wasn't making a political statement nearly as much as he was pointing at the shattered hole in the glass ceiling that would encourage his daughters to strive for their own dreams.

And how does some flippant negative comment on a dad's Face Book post build the kingdom of God? What a missed opportunity to love well. Sometimes, when we're demanding evidence, what the moment truly calls for is empathy.

Pastor Albert Tate said, *"If I can't tell my story without having to defend my tears... if I must prove to you my own pain? No. Empathy means you just sit with me even if you don't agree with me. Some Christians have really big convictions and really anemic compassion."*

But Jesus shows us otherwise. Before Jesus raises his buddy, his card-playing partner, his teammate, his ride-or-die, Lazarus, from the dead, Laz's sisters are ticked at Jesus... pounding his chest in exasperation because he didn't come quickly enough to heal and save their brother before Lazarus died. Mary and Martha are weeping. And what does Jesus do? He shows empathy. He weeps with them. Why? Doesn't Jesus know he's going to fix the whole thing in just a second? Sure. But this was his way of showing his love to them and to us. *"Before I ever heal you or deliver you... I understand you."* It was his way of saying, *"My fixing it isn't as important as me sitting with Mary and Martha and them knowing – "Wow. Jesus feels my pain."* Even if he doesn't agree with it. They are crying about something he's about to fix. But Jesus comes alongside. And he invites us to do the same. We can't see resurrection when we're looking down on each other; only when we look up alongside of each other.

So, Jesus tells all these stories of faith from beginning to end; probably broke out the felt boards and a PowerPoint presentation. And those Emmaus Road walkers were like, “*Okay, geez... we get it... you know what’s happening... sorry we called you out on that earlier.*”

Feeling they owed it to him, perhaps, they invited him to get something to eat with them, and Jesus accepts. They wind up at the table where Jesus takes the bread; he blesses and breaks and gives. This is the pattern that will route our future, friends. Bless, break, give. It’s a DBR rhythm. [*death*], [*burial*], [*resurrection*]. And you didn’t want to sit in the section of death (*and yes, the snacks aren’t nearly as good in that section*), but death is a healthy part of the process. It’s a necessary release in order to be open to the new gift. “*Be alert! Be Present! I’m about to do something brand new!*” we preach. Such implications are the release of some old things. And that *new* thing? It’s around us, among us, within us... we’re just too concerned about the dying part. But that just needs to be given over to the burial section because we’re missing the life all around us.

Before I moved back home to Columbia and gave up my Tulsa email address, I would get an email about once a week from my friend Mary Noble. Strange thing is I officiated her memorial service more than a year before I started receiving the emails. The message that kept showing up over and over in my inbox after her death said the same, single, simple thing: “*Don’t miss it!*” Every time. Then there was always a link to click, too. I never clicked it... not even once. People told me it was SPAM. And I get that since Mary died some time ago. She’s in the resurrection now. But she’s smiling I know... every time that found my inbox because she’d say that sort of thing to me all the time. “*Don’t miss it.*” Don’t miss what? D.B.R. [*Death. Burial. Resurrection*]. Don’t miss the sacred rhythm.

When Jesus blesses the bread at the table that first Easter at some home on a cul-de-sac off Emmaus Blvd, those at the table with him think, “*hold up...*” then he breaks it, and they think “*wait a minute*” but when he gives it – all questions were answered. It was Jesus. Not only did he know all of what transpired, he *is* what transpired. And now they’re the ones who are *woke*. They’re the ones running. They’re the ones spreading the word, “*He’s still rolling stones!*” and “*We gotta get on up, yeah!*” They’re not off to tell people what they *haven’t* seen or to complain about what *didn’t* work [*death*] or how the movement is trailing off to its own [*burial*]... No! They’re off to share what they *have* seen! [*resurrection*]. What they *know* is true. [*resurrection*]. What has been *given* to them! [*resurrection*].

It’s not all glamorous stuff, you know. What did Jesus do every time he recognized he was the most powerful person in the room? He served. When Mary’s message would hit my inbox, “*Don’t miss it!*” I would stop and think, listen, and look. Where am I to

serve? What do I need to release so I'm ready to bless and give? Whose voice needs to be lifted? What bitterness needs to subside? What division needs to cease? What walls need to come down? Rigor mortis is the third stage of death...but it's not the final stage. We can shake free yet.

Don't miss it, friends – this Easter stuff – this Easter Sunday field trip. We've got a Savior who isn't discouraged and yet understands our discouragement. He isn't negative even though he gets there is plenty to be negative about. He's alive and running forward and saying, "*People of faith, let's demonstrate less, 'I want to speak to the manager' and more 'How can I be of service?'*"

Because our attitudes are on regular display. They build up, or they drive away. We can turn the tide for others and even ourselves. "*Don't think you have to transform before you live a great story. Live a great story and the story itself will transform you.*" (Donald Miller). Live this Easter story forward, would you? Because Christ is risen! [*Christ is risen indeed!*]. Do you really think so? Are we living so?

The world is looking for something. What gleam in our eye can bring hope, not doom and gloom; not [*death*] not [*burial*]; not even rigor mortis, but [*resurrection*]? *DBR* – maybe it'll catch on. If it will, then let it begin with you and me and every hope that may spring forth from this Easter Sunday. Because hope is a group effort, and the last word is always [*resurrection, resurrection, {everybody...} resurrection!*].

May it be so.

SONG OF FOCUS

"An Easter Joy to the World"

MUSIC BY ISAAC WATTS; LYRICS BY ED VARNUM

(WITH A REPEATED PHRASE FROM

"CHRIST THE LORD IS RISEN TODAY"

BY CHARLES WESLEY)

Joy to the world, the Savior lives!

O people, lift your eyes!

Receive by faith this word God gave:

by grace, like Christ we rise.

By grace, like Christ we rise.

In Christ, the cross, the grave, the skies!

Joy to the world, the Savior reigns,

and in him all death dies!

From death and grave, God raised new life!

By grace, like Christ we rise.

By grace, like Christ we rise.

In Christ, the cross, the grave, the skies!

Joy to the world this Easter morn!

This day God's hope supplies.

Lift up your voice, God's praises sing:

by grace, like Christ we rise.

By grace, like Christ we rise.

In Christ, the cross, the grave, the skies!

BROAD HEARTS BROAD MINDS BROAD REACH