

Gospel lesson

On the day of the resurrection, an astounding thing happened on the road to Emmaus...



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/qnpi-103-appearance-emmaus/>;
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Luke 24:13-35 NRSV

¹³ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem,

¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.

¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them,

¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

¹⁷ And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad.

¹⁸ 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?"

¹⁹ 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,

²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him.

²¹ 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.

²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning,

²³ 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.

²⁴ 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."

²⁵ Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!

²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?"

²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on.

²⁹ 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.

³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.

³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

³² 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?"

³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together.

³⁴ They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!"

³⁵ 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 Word of God for the people of God

<Interactive time>



picture from <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/miracle-sunday-worship-study-resources#worship-series>

Week 2 - Disciples Empowered by the Holy Spirit

What were the disciples on the road to Emmaus doing?

(Were they proclaiming the Good News?)

<Let them respond>

Why were they not telling everyone about the risen Jesus? <Let them respond>

By the end of today's Gospel story, they were excitedly telling about Jesus's resurrection. What empowered them to do that? <Let them respond>

Were they empowered from the moment Jesus met them on the road? What did it take for them to be ready to tell the Good News? <Let them respond>

How are we empowered to share the Good News today? <Let them respond>

Do we start proclaiming it as soon as the Holy Spirit starts moving in our lives? What does it take for us to be ready to tell the Good News? <Let them respond>

It can take some time for us to internalize what God is telling us. Along the way have been people of faith passing the message along for us to hear. Where and with whom have you shared the Good News and the love of Christ this week? <Let them respond>

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May God (who created us, who gave Jesus to die and to live for us, and who sent the Holy Spirit to dwell within us) empower you to share the Good News with love throughout your life, making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

<Hymn "Open Our Eyes">

TFWS #2086>

Message: Astounded Us



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/stories-that-matter/week-2-third-sunday-of-easter-year-a/week-2-third-sunday-of-easter-year-a-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Surprising Lord of new life and hope, as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That when we are astounded by Your grace, we joyously share Your love with all. Amen.

The "Stories That Matter" in this series "Astounded Us" today:

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"Resurrection unsettles our certainty and invites us into astonishment. ~~This week's worship explores~~ [Let us now explore] how joy and disruption coexist as we live into the astounding news that Love has conquered death."

By the end of winter, people are tired of cold, snow, and ice. We do not want any more winter. We want warmth and new life to enjoy.

After living in a world of sin, people are tired of the pain, the hate, and the death. We do not want any

more sin. We want love and new life to enjoy.

The psalmist talked about how the snare of death encompassed him, so he called out to the Lord. The Lord blessed him, so he responded with thanksgiving where everyone could see that the Lord is to be praised. Have you called out to the Lord lately? How do you respond to God's blessings?

It is now spring: the snow has melted, plants are blooming, and migrating birds have returned – and those birds are building nests in all kinds of places. Even if we have not seen it before, we have been told this happens. It can be a delightful surprise to come across a nest – especially fun if you can watch it over time, to see eggs laid, hatch, and the baby birds grow until they finally fly away.

The women at the tomb on the morning of Jesus's resurrection were surprised and delighted by what the angels told them. Jesus had told His followers it would happen, yet news of it still astounded them. They ran to the tomb and found it empty, and did not know what to make of it.

When you come across an empty nest in the springtime? Is it a sign of new life to come or an empty shell of life now gone? What do you do with the nest?

In South Otselic, robins like to build a shelf on the window ledge of the outer kitchen entryway. The robins are timid, so if people get near, they fly away and leave what we do with the nest up to us. We have a choice about what to do with God's gift, just

as the disciples had a choice about what to do with the news of Jesus's resurrection.

The entryway window ledge is an inconvenient location for people, so if the nest is empty it gets removed, torn apart and discarded. If it already has eggs in it, tender hearts prefer to leave it in place for the eggs to hatch. The miracle of new life is astounding.

The story of the empty tomb was inconvenient for the temple leaders, so they denied it. But the disciples saw angels in that tomb, so they did not deny it, but they did not know what to make of it. The news and appearances of Jesus alive anew were astounding.

I have taken pictures of eggs in a nest on the window ledge, following their development as hatchlings until the nest was empty, and shared the story so that others might know too.

God came to the disciples, helping their faith develop until they were ready to go out and proclaim the good news as apostles. Jesus met Mary at the tomb, talked with the travelers on the road to Emmaus, appeared to Simon and to others in the room that night, like a mother robin tends to her new hatchlings. They grew in faith rapidly.

A mother robin will coax fledglings out of the nest by leaving it, then teasing them a little way off with a worm in her mouth. Hungry, the young birds will flap their wings and eventually leave the nest to live independently and start the next generation.

By Pentecost, Jesus had already ascended into heaven. The Holy Spirit came to the disciples, causing them to leave the safety of their room and to proclaim the Good News to others. We heard the response to Peter's witnessing today - about three thousand persons were baptized in the name of Christ on that very day. They were astounded by the Holy Spirit working through the apostles.

The apostles had learned to fly with the power of the Holy Spirit and were making disciples of Jesus Christ. These disciples now needed to grow in faith. We as disciples of Jesus need to grow in faith, too. What does that look like?

In the first epistle from Peter, we were told that as believers we "come to trust in God, who raised [Jesus] from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God." Our souls are purified, "so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God."

Last week I asked you to look for God's action in the world. This week I want to you look for where God is extending a call for you to do something. How can you show that "genuine mutual love" to others? How can you let others be astounded by the Holy Spirit working through you?

- ✝ Does it mean encouraging someone to feel like there is better hope for their future?
- ✝ Is it a ministry of presence, just being there

either in person or through some form of communication technology?

- ✝ Are you able to provide a service for someone, perhaps give them a ride somewhere?
- ✝ Is it speaking up politically on an issue that is harmful to someone you know?

Please look for what God is calling you to as a disciple empowered by the Holy Spirit since Jesus astounded us by rising from the dead - and share the astounding Good News, praising God by how you live, in the process!