

OPENING:

The Gospels offers a series of proofs for Jesus' Resurrection:

the empty tomb,

the Angel,

the female disciples' testimony,

Jesus' own appearance in the Upper Room,

and right before this story in Luke's Gospel,

Jesus' appearance to the two disciples on the Emmaus Road.

These cascading proofs are important, not only for what happened in history, but also for **how we** encounter Christ in our own lives.

An encounter with Jesus means, either in the Biblical account or in our experience: fear, shock, confusion, joy, amazement, belief and disbelief, and a whole lot of questions.

Two more proofs are also offered in the Gospels:

In the Gospel of Mark, dear Mark, the sun darkens alongside Jesus' death.

A "total eclipse of the heart" happened on Good Friday, just as one happened this last Monday.

Can you imagine that?

And do you know that this solar eclipse is actually attested outside of the New Testament? Historians record it happening around the time when Jesus died...¹

Not to be outdone, in Matthew, an earthquake accompanies the scene.

We had one of those too last week.

Folks have tried to connect both, the eclipse and the earthquake, to some larger meaning, about Jesus and the 2nd Coming. You can take it wherever you want, I am more interested in how Jesus shows up in our lives right now, today and yesterday and tomorrow. How we react or do not.

ST. TIMOTHY'S

May I be so bold as to say that Jesus has shown up here at St. Timothy's of late?

¹ Dodd, C.H. 1978. *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. (17th Edition) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 425.

We had the most remarkable Easter in spirit and numbers, and I have been trying to rest in that reality ever since.

Last week, we celebrated the arrival of our new Associate Rector, the first time that we have had a bilingual priest as a full-time staff member.

I was actually looking forward to this week when it was just be church “right down the middle” where Jesus, I am sure, would still have been here in Word and Sacrament.

But... rewind to Easter, if you remember that was the last time we had a baptism, and after it was all said and done and our 3 candidates were duly initiated and as all the children were leaving the crossing, I said “Anyone else want to come up?” No one did, of course, this is an Episcopal Church, but afterwards Laura Beeton Carter, the mother of our baptismal candidate, said that she **almost did**, almost did bring her daughter Willamena right up on that Easter Sunday. Jesus was present there with 273 people, jam packed in this room, in this community of St. Timothy’s. But, that would have been a little too Altar Call, a little too Billy Sunday, a little too Baptist for us all.

So we waited for a few weeks and here we are.

This was only the second of two very interesting liturgical moments around Baptism that have happened here of late that might raise some eyebrows among the so-called ‘Frozen Chosen.’

Palm Sunday, in Henry Hall, and I had the Aspergillum and I was going around and sharing the Baptismal Water, imploring you to “Remember your Baptism.”

Our youngest members, infants Mary Emmanuelle and Isaac, cried when I did this. Our oldest members grimaced.

Eventually, I got to my son and dipped in a full dose of water and hit him with.

On cue, we did not plan this, he fell down on the parish hall floor, SLAIN BY THE SPIRIT.

St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church had gone full evangelical, full Pentecostal it seemed.

LEARNING STYLES:

It’s a part of our institutional Anglican DNA, that we don’t trust our emotions. It’s also a part of modern psychology, we don’t like being manipulated, we need proof, hard proof, and still sometimes we don’t even trust what we see.

Jesus knows this, Jesus understands
that some learners are auditory,
some are visual,
and when the disciples still don't believe, "While in their joy, they were still
disbelieving." (!)

Jesus recognizes that some learners are experiential, they learn by doing, by
participating, by touching and feeling and doing.

In the Emmaus story, the moment of recognition, of belief, happens at a meal. Prior
to that, the disciples did not recognize the Risen Lord through all the doctrinal
instruction, but then in the breaking of the bread, it all comes clear in this moment:
In today's story, we have that same pattern, we have Jesus showing up, in the flesh,
offering up his wounds as evidence,

But the clincher, like in the Emmaus story, is sharing the meal, is in the eating, it's
almost comical, a piece of broiled fish seals the deal.

I am so proud of Willamena for wanting to participate, for wanting to learn by
experience, by doing. I have preached this before, that the best portrait of faith is a
baby about to be baptized. The baby is the bravest person in the room.

What about a 7 year old... who is willing to say, like Thomas, "My Lord and My
God."

Ready to trust her parents and this church, and say "put me in coach."

BISHOP JOHNSTON:

I once heard Bishop Shannon Johnston, former Bishop of Virginia, tell a story to a
group of those soon to be confirmed, a story about an important moment where
Christ showed up in his life. He talked about how he was in school as a teenager,
and he was going from Biology Class to Algebra and "Boom" it hit him.

Jesus was there and he knew that he wanted to be a priest.

(He was clear that it does not have to happen in a dramatic/ big way and also that,
he does not trust "emotional" moments like that, that is not the type of person he is.)

What do you do in those moments? How do you know if it's Jesus, what is our
equivalent of inspecting the wounds, of making sure that it's not a ghost, of eating
the fish?

For Bishop Johnston: he said that he waited until he got home from school to tell
anyone, and then he told his parents.

They were taken aback, and they said: “Well that is interesting, that you want to be a priest, you don’t even like Church.”

His parents took him to the Episcopal Church there in Florence, Alabama, and they went through it again, the teenager told the clergyperson that he wanted to be a priest too and that he had met Jesus in between classes. The priest said the same thing to him that his parents had: “This is interesting, you don’t even like church,” And then Bishop Johnston said that what the rector said next was really important. He said: “let’s get you involved in the community.” Let’s learn by doing.

CONCLUSION:

Jesus does not explain the Resurrection when he returns, or say where he has been, he says “Peace”... he is present with them, and then he shares a meal with them. It’s the most ordinary way to experience the most extraordinary moment.

Jesus opens up this tremendous world to the disciples and to all of us.

The Easter miracle is a “day of opening” where the tomb is opened the tomb, our eyes opened, Scripture opened, our minds opened.”²

The Easter story is too good to be true, God’s grace is too much for all of us.

Clarity comes with a lot of questions, a lot of work in the community and inside the Church. We learn by seeing, by hearing, and by doing.

Back then disciples did not see the Church, but they believed in it but saw Christ.

Today it is the opposite. We see the Church and believe in it, but have trouble with a Christ that we long to see.³

Luke writes, in both the Gospel reading and in the passage from Acts, that “you are witnesses.” The word can and will mean “Martyr” for the Faith, it can mean a passive eye-witness to what’s going on, but what it primarily means is that we are “witnesses” here today of something that we actually have not really seen, and we live our lives as testimonies to that truth.

One could even say you can stare directly at it, it won’t hurt, it will heal you, and give you everlasting life. **AMEN**

² Bovon François, 2012. *Luke (Volume 3): A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 19:28-24:53*. Helmut Koester and James E Crouch, trans. (*Hermeneia* Commentary Series). Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 395.

³ Bovon, 400