

St. Columba's Episcopal Church
April 23, 2023 – 3 Easter
The Road to Emmaus – Luke 24:13-35
The Rev. Dr. Susan Kraus

The risen Lord Jesus does not leave his friends alone. On Easter Sunday we heard the account from Matthew's Gospel (28:1-10) of Jesus appearing to Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" early on Easter morning. The women had gone to Jesus' tomb to grieve near his body. Suddenly there was a great earthquake and an angel whose appearance was like lightning told them the astonishing news that Jesus had been raised from the dead. The angel commissioned them to tell Jesus' other disciples this good news. As they ran on their errand, Jesus met them on the way. He greeted them and allowed them to touch him. He told them not to be afraid.

The risen Lord Jesus does not leave his friends alone. In the evening of that first Easter Jesus appeared to the disciples who were gathered behind locked doors for fear of what might happen to them because they were followers of the one who was crucified. Jesus stood among them, showed them the wounds of the crucifixion in his resurrected body, and spoke to them. They knew that Jesus was alive. Thomas was not there, and he doubted what his friends told him. So, Jesus came again, a week later, and gave Thomas the proof he needed so that he would know and believe that his Lord was alive.

The risen Lord Jesus does not leave his friends alone. This morning's Gospel is the famous story of the road to Emmaus. It is Easter day and two of Jesus' disciples – one unnamed follower and Cleopas, who is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible – are walking away from Jerusalem, where Jesus had been crucified. They were speaking to each other about what had happened to Jesus. Anyone who has grieved for someone they love knows that at first nothing in the world has any importance but the loved one and the loss. These two disciples were so absorbed in their grief that they did not recognize Jesus when he walked with them and spoke to them.

So, Jesus made his identity clearer as he taught them about the Messiah and provided from their scripture an explanation of what had happened to him. Still their eyes were not opened. But there was something about this man that made them want to remain with him. They begged him to stay with them and share a meal. "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."

For these two men their encounter with the risen Christ was more than a comforting assurance of his continued life. This moment of recognition enabled them to see how Jesus had already been known to them as he explained the scripture: "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" And this encounter sent them immediately back to Jerusalem, a dangerous place for the followers of Jesus, because they were compelled

to share their experience of the risen Lord with the eleven apostles and their companions, other friends of Jesus.

Because the women and men who saw the risen Christ shared that Good News with others, empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are gathered together here in Jesus' name. We believe that Jesus is among us when we gather in his name. We pray that Christ will be known to us in the sacrament of his body and blood, the Holy Eucharist.

This morning we honor Kit Sherrill by hearing readings and singing hymns that he chose for this service. His choices speak to us about his life, what he valued most on his journey of following Jesus. Justice. Kindness. Humility. Trust in God. Peace. Gratitude. Faithfulness. Love.

A single word can speak volumes when we take the time to consider it, to enter into the memories it evokes. Kit's wife, Leigh, shared with me three words she believes highlight Kit's life – love, acceptance, and forgiveness. I did not have the privilege of knowing Kit for very long, but the word that immediately comes to my mind about him is “kind.”

I invite you now to share a word or a brief story about Kit that expresses something of his importance in your life, something about him as the man you have known and cared for. You may speak a word from your seat or feel free to come forward here.

Kit Sherrill is certainly a friend of Jesus. So, even though we are saddened by his loss, let us be deeply comforted when we remember that the risen Lord Jesus does not leave his friends alone. And may we, like Kit, always be counted among the friends of our Lord. Alleluia and amen.