

Easter 3, Year A
April 6, 2008

RCL
Acts 2:14a, 36-41
Psalm 116:1-3, 10-17
1 Peter 1:17-23
Luke 24:13-35

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Isn't it nice to be able to get outside again? I haven't started working in the garden yet – it's still awfully wet, and as much as I hope not, it's still possible that the temperature may go below freezing – but the promise of warmer weather is there.

And, once again, I can enjoy walking outside. Getting through the park near our home is a hip-boot affair in a winter like this one, and when the snow does begin to melt, yesterday's footprints become today's ice and that makes the going slow and treacherous. Hopefully that is behind us now, because I have in my family a devoted, four-legged friend who must have his walk! Whatever the weather. It's Gabriel, our golden retriever-collie mix, who gets me out – me or Jack, he doesn't care which - for our daily mile.

These walks have become, for me, a time of prayer. Oh, it's interrupted when other doggie friends approach or a squirrel crosses our path, or when I need to stop and clean up, but mostly it's quiet time to think something through that's been on my mind, or to meditate and to seek God's guidance for the day ahead.

I remember reading something from a magazine once when I was in seminary. There was plenty of reading to do there and little of it was from magazines, but I recall this simple line from what must have been a health or fitness magazine: "Go out. You'll see something good."

I've thought about that line so often since. Maybe it struck me at the time because it's what I really needed – to get out – outside – and see what was going on beyond my own narrow, introspective scope. Outside we'll always see something good, especially if we're looking for it. Outside is where God's creation is so much more obvious. And usually it's where we find each other.

We're in the middle of the Easter season now, in the midst of the joyous proclamation of Jesus' resurrection from death. But it's not always easy to feel that joy or to understand what it has to do with the routine of our lives. What I want to suggest to you today is that in this walk the two in our gospel reading are taking, there is as much discovery for us as there is for them.

In this story there is evidence of God's desire to make our lives joyful – each one of us very ordinary people. God can and does bring new life, new energy, new direction to us through Jesus, and it happens in the simplest things in life – like a walk down a road. "Go out. You'll see something good."

He meets us wherever we are. Jesus comes out to find us and walks with us. And often we don't even know he's there. We're involved in our own stuff, thinking only about our world, what's happening to us and those

we love, absorbed in our own troubles and confusion and grief and our own victories, and so we do not recognize that it's Jesus who is right there with us.

We don't have to earn his coming. We don't have to be living a virtuous life. He died to save sinners. His coming to us is the gift of resurrection. We don't have to work to get it. What we do have to do is open our eyes to the stranger and let him join us.

He listens to our story. Jesus already knows our deepest hopes and desires but he listens as we tell him what worries us, how unhappy we are, how we have lost hope, how life holds nothing new for us. He listens until we're finished, and then he begins to teach us.

In our time Jesus teaches us through the writings of Holy Scripture, which we read in worship and at Bible Study and as part of our daily rule of life, and he teaches and touches us also in the sacrament of Holy Communion. Word and Sacrament reveal God's goodness and love for us to those who were not able to see him in his life on earth.

Our God is the loving father in the story of the Prodigal Son who comes out to meet us on the road as we finally return to him and then throws a party to celebrate. This same God now he meets us on the road as a stranger and teaches us about himself.

And the result is that we do not want him to leave. We urge him to stay, to come in and have supper. And when he breaks the bread for us we know him.

When they realize who has been with them all this time, Cleopas and his companion rejoice and return immediately to the other followers of Jesus with fresh hope and excitement. They experience their own resurrection, the renewal of their Spirits, the revitalization of their hearts.

And so it is with us. The joy of Easter is in the discovery, again, that God cares enough for us ordinary sinners to meet us where we are on the road, to listen with understanding to our pain and suffering, to walk with us in it, and to turn us around and use us as his instruments, to make life better for those around us. This is the journey we make as our faith grows, and we make it over and over again. In this lies the joy of Easter.

The God we worship does not require us to be perfect before he will grant us new life. Instead he comes into human life with us. He meets us where we are and the result of that for us is that we desire to turn our lives around for him. We do not need to be among the most righteous in order to receive his grace. We need only to welcome the stranger in our midst, remembering that it may be Jesus.

So go out. You'll see something good. Take a walk, and listen for the voice of the Savior.
Thanks be to God.

Soli Deo Gloria