

The Rev. John Sampson, Pastor
Glen Ridge Congregational Church

“Lost and Unexpectedly Found”



Sunday, April 12, 2026
Luke 24:13 – 35

Will you pray with me?

God, may the words of my mouth, and the meditations of all of our hearts, be acceptable to you, our rock, and our redeemer.

Amen.

Alleluia!

Christ is risen!

Happy Easter!

We are an Easter people. We are a people of resurrection, who are encouraged to believe that death does not have the final say. We are a people who are invited to live lives unbounded by the fear of death.

And, we are also a people of the table. A people who believe sharing a meal among ourselves is central to experiencing our faith. A people who come again and again to this table to be nourished in body and in spirit.

Today, on this Sunday after Easter, our spiritual ancestors share with us a story that links both of these aspects of our faith. It tells us something almost unbelievable. It tells us that we can meet the risen Christ, even here, and even now, in the act of breaking bread, and of sharing a meal. And that what seems lost to us, can be found even in the simplest of acts.

Christ is risen, but the body that returns is not like the body that went to the cross. The body that meets the disciples on the road to Emmaus is unrecognizable even to those who knew it best. It is a body whose identity is withheld from those who saw it heal, and teach and feed. The body that is resurrected is unknown; a stranger.

At least to our minds.

The disciples who meet Jesus on the road do not recognize him with their eyes. And they don't recognize him with their minds. But there is something about the mystery before them that is understood by their hearts. The encounter on the way, so long ago, registers on the level of their hearts, which is not to say they simply have an emotional response to the man they journey with.

In the Bible, the heart is the center of one's being, which we understand when we say something like "we're going to get to the heart of the matter". To respond to the stranger with burning hearts

tells us that those disciples could feel Christ's presence on all the levels of their being, even if they didn't know who he was. It was their hopes and their dreams, their fears and their anxieties, their bodies in their beauty and in their brokenness, all of the unconscious and visceral drives that we all share, because we are human, that were set afire in the presence of the one before them.

But in a final stroke, even their eyes and their minds were opened when they broke bread together. In the moment of sharing a meal, the resurrected Jesus was revealed completely.

Today, on this Sunday after Easter, we come to this table to break bread together. But because this is Christ's table, we come to break bread with him too. And just like those disciples so long ago, we can be speaking of Jesus, and the events of Easter as if they were in the past, that the story of Easter is a story of history. And this story can warm our hearts, can touch all of the levels of our being, but perhaps we still don't see, perhaps our minds still can't grasp what is standing right before us; what is to be found in the bread, and in the juice that we will share together.

Because maybe, just maybe, we are expecting the risen Christ to look like the body before it was nailed to the cross. We're expecting to meet the risen Christ as a man. We are assuming Christ will return as a victorious king. We believe that Jesus will come again and present himself according to the inchoate image that we hold somewhere deep in our mind's eye.

But the Easter body that encounters us on the way of our lives is actually something completely different. It is a body that is crusty, and soft, that smells of wheat, and that is broken and shared. It is a

body that nourishes, not only our minds, but also our flesh. It is a body that tastes sweet and quenches the thirst, not only of our mouths, but also of our dreams. It is a body that smells fruity and stains our lips. It is a body given freely, holding nothing back. It is a body that is drawn to us, as we are drawn to it.

And even though the body the disciples meet in our story disappears once it is broken, we are promised that Christ will come again, and again, and again, even to this table, and even to our lives. And perhaps our eyes will not see it, and our minds will not grasp it, perhaps unlike the disciples of our story we won't experience that moment of spiritual denouement. But as I said last week, Easter doesn't wait for our understanding, it doesn't need our consent. It says to us, "I will walk the journey with you, even if you don't know who I am, because I know who you are."

So, on this Sunday after Easter, let us shout it again. Gathering around this table let us proclaim together:

Alleluia!

Christ is risen!

Happy Easter!

Amen.