

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Good morning. Welcome to our service of morning prayers here in the afternoon chapel of the Memorial Church. I invite you please to rise and join with me in reciting our responsorial psalm, which is number 57 in your black [inaudible 00:03:55]. Be merciful to me. Oh God, be merciful to me. For in the, my soul takes refuge. In the shadow of thy wings, I will take refuge until the storms of destruction passed by.

Congregation:

I cry out to God Most High. To God, who will fulfill His purpose for me.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Be exalted, oh God, above the heavens. Let thy glory be over all the earth.

Congregation:

They set a net for my steps; my soul was bowed down.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

They dug a pit in my way, but they have fallen into it themselves.

Congregation:

My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast. I will sing and make melody.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Awake, my soul. Awake, O harp and lyre. I will awake the dawn.

Congregation:

I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

For thy steadfast love is great to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds.

Congregation:

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth!

Choir:

(Singing)

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

This is a reading from the 24th chapter of the Gospel of Luke, beginning at the 13th verse. "Now on that same day, the first day of the week, two of the disciples were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself came near and went with them, but their eyes

were kept from recognizing Him. And He said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad.

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?' 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, and how our chief priests and leaders handed Him over to be condemned to death and crucified, 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. Moreover, some women of our group have astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 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 had said He was alive. 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.'

Then Jesus said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared. Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into glory?' Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them the things about Himself and all the scriptures. As they came near the village to which they were going, He walked ahead as if He were going on, 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. When He was at table with them, He took bread, blessed and broke it and gave it to them.

Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him and He vanished from their sight. 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.' That same hour, they got up and returned to Jerusalem and they found the 11 and their companions gathered together. They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed and He has appeared to Simon.' Then they told what had happened on the road and how He had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread." Here ends the lesson. So there's no saint for today. There is, but he's been displaced. It's the Octave of Easter, these eight days after Easter, and the liturgical calendar's an interesting thing. I learned some of these things from my colleague over at the Divinity School, Susie Hayward.

But the season of Easter was originally about 40 days. It went from Easter Day to Ascension because in the first book or the first chapter of the Book of Acts, it says that Jesus was with them making appearances for 40 days before sending into the heavens. But in the 20th century, we extended the season to 50 days to include 10 more days and go all the way to the Feast of Pentecost. This is for a few reasons, partly just to get us to the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, but it's also because 50 days is roughly a seventh of the calendar year, and so the Easter season is a Sabbath within the year. And the Octave of Easter, these eight days from Easter Sunday to the first Sunday after Easter, or the second Sunday after Easter is a Sabbath within the 50 days, about a seventh of those 50 days. And so here on this Wednesday, we are residing in a Sabbath upon Sabbath. If you come back to church on Sunday, you'll be in a Sabbath upon Sabbath upon Sabbath, be able to get some rest.

So no saint today. If you'd like to hear about the Romanian Gothic Saint Sabbath the Lector, I invite you to return on April 12, 2028, which is the next time the 12th will fall on a Wednesday. I'll be happy to tell you about him then. This is also... I'm going to tell you, my last morning prayer service of the year. We're going to be having senior talks, and so I will be displaced like poor Sabbath by more important remarks. Also, this has become a popular pulpit. I haven't been here this spring as much as I'd like, but I just wanted to thank you all for your faithfulness to this community. It's one of the joys of my ministry here to join here with you on Wednesday mornings and tell you obscure history lessons. It's a long reading

assigned for today. I'll keep my remarks relatively short. I'm glad that if I'm to close my season with you speaking at morning prayers that I get to talk to you about this lesson.

So it is Easter day. I think that needs to be clear, and these two disciples are leaving Jerusalem. And I think that we should recognize that the gospels described this in fairly straightforward language. I feel like if you took the gospels to a screenwriting workshop, they would have some notes. The disciples are running away. The man that they love and follow has been tortured and killed, His body has been stolen as far as they know. They are scared for their lives, and if they're leaving Jerusalem, they're leaving Jerusalem because they are afraid that they are going to die and they're getting out of town and they're traveling on this road to Emmaus, which is not necessarily a safe road. It's a dangerous road, but it's more safe than sticking around Jerusalem. And while on this road, they meet a stranger and they listen to Him, and when they come to the place where it's time to spend the night, He goes on to move ahead into the darkness on this dangerous road overnight, and they say to Him, "The road is dangerous. Stay with us. Let us host you."

And then they give Him the honor of blessing the meal and He does, and only when He does do they recognize who He is. They recognize Him as Jesus. And then as soon as they do recognize Him as Jesus, He vanishes from their sight. And then they return. I think this lesson tells us so much about what resurrection life is for us who are also on our own roads, who also travel our own ways, which often feel risky and dangerous. Jesus is only revealed to these two disciples in their goodness to Him. If He had come to them... If a stranger had come to them and they'd said, "Oh, he's a threat. This is a dangerous road." Or, "He's a stranger, what do we care? What do we owe this man," and walked on, they never would've seen Him. It's only because they received Him with hospitality that the vision is made clear.

It's only because they break bread with Him, share food with him, share safety and shelter with Him that He is made obvious to them. But then also as soon as they do, He vanishes. And they have to go searching for Him again. I think this tells us something else about resurrection life that we never possess the risen Christ. He never becomes ours to hold onto and batten down the hatches and stay with. He vanishes again, so we must go searching again, and it's important that after He vanishes, the disciples get up and they return to Jerusalem, return to the place they were running from, return to the place of danger, to meet their friends and meet their brothers and look for Him again there. His vanishing makes them brave rather than making them afraid.

To me, this is my favorite resurrection story because it invites us into bravery. It invites us to follow on after Jesus, and it invites us to look for Him in gathering together and being good to one another and on the road with the strangers we meet along the way. Thank you for having gathered with me this year. Thank you for accompanying me and this church on our way. I look forward to going forward with you as we make our way to Emmaus and beyond. Please rise for the prayers. The Lord be with you.

Congregation:

And also with you.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Let us pray. Oh God, His blessed son made Himself known to His disciples in the breaking of bread, opened the eyes of our faith that we may behold Him in all His redeeming work, who lives in reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen. Please join in singing our closing Hymn, number 180, Now the Green Blade Riseth.

Congregation/Choir:
(Singing)

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all this day and evermore. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Let us bless the Lord.

Congregation:

Thanks be to God.