

Third Sunday of Easter, Sunday, April 26, 2020, Year A

**St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA**

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: Luke 24:13-35

***"The Stranger"***

Heavenly Father, thank you for today. Thank you for the privilege that we have received from you of being able to worship you and use this technology to touch our parish family, and touch others throughout the world. You asked us, Lord Jesus, to be your "*witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth*" (Acts 1:8) We here at the ends of the earth thank you. Lord, bless us. We pray for the day when we will be able to gather together in person, being wise; being distanced – with masks and gloves – taking the right precautions – but we will be able to be together. Father, than you for this parish family. Thank you for the words that you have given me. In Jesus Name. Amen.

Today's Holy Gospel reading starts with two of Jesus' followers walking from Jerusalem on a seven-mile journey to the nearby village of Emmaus. Along comes a stranger who immediately asks them what they are discussing that is making them look so downcast. They tell him that they had regarded Jesus of Nazareth as more than a prophet. God's power had been present with Him in His miracles and His teaching, and they just could not doubt that this was the Man of God's choice, the Messiah. He was the one who would redeem Israel – and it has only been three days since He had been crucified. These two followers were devastated; if Jesus had been the one to redeem Israel, He should have been defeating the Romans and the corrupt Temple leadership who were oppressing and holding them down – and not dying at their hands. Apparently, they had not gotten word yet.

God and His Prophets throughout Holy Scripture - pointed forward to a fulfilment that could only be found when God's anointed One, His Messiah, His Christ, took Israel's suffering, and the world's suffering, on to Himself, died under its own weight, and then rose again as the beginning of God's new creation, God's new people; God's new covenant. This is what had to take place; and now it just had. They could not recognize Him – and I think the reason being that Jesus' body had been transformed – just like at the Mount of Transfiguration, with Peter, James and John. Jesus glowed and they could not recognize His holy body. They also couldn't recognize the events that had just happened as the story of God's redemption. I want to suggest to you that the two go hand in hand – the remarkable resurrection body of Jesus and the sacrificial events that took place. I have said it before – in order to have an Easter Sunday – there HAD to be a Good Friday. I stress the word HAD.

This Gospel passage forms one of the most powerful encouragements for us to pray for His presence, and sense of guidance, whenever we study the Bible. We need to listen for His Holy Spirit to speak to our hearts through His Holy Word – Holy Scripture. Only with Him at our side will our hearts burn within us (verse 32), and lead us to the point where we see Him face to face. Jesus opened their minds to Him in the Scriptures and how they all point to Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promises. I used to ask my Confirmation classes, "how many pages of the Bible are Jesus on? And the answer they would say – "all of them, Fr. John!"

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The Road to Emmaus should be a personal road for each of us. You can either remember the time and place where you met Jesus for the first time and recognized Him as your Lord, as the Son of God, as your Redeemer – or it might be the place – here - and the time now – when you invite Him into your heart. You have heard me many times refer to Revelation 3:20 and the image of Jesus standing at a door with no handle or doorknob – and knocking. He says, “*Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.*”

And so my dear friends – invite Him in, meet Him and give Jesus your heart. You will then start a relationship with Him and you can bring Him your problems, your agony, your struggles, your concerns, and if need be – your sickness, just as on the road to Emmaus those two followers of the Lord did; be prepared to share it in prayer with the blessed One who approaches – for them it was a stranger. Learn to listen for His voice, explaining His Word to you, leading you forward, and warming your heart by applying Holy Scripture to what is going on in your life. He really wants you to give Him your concerns and He really wants you to let Him in!