



St. Andrew's By-the-Sea
The Episcopal Church
in Destin, Florida

“Seeing Jesus in plain view”
3rd Sunday of Easter
April 23, 2023
Luke 24:13-35

A Homily by the Rev'd Jo P. Popham

Before “American Idol” and “The Voice” there was “Star Search.” It began in 1983 and last aired in 2004. The show gave many comedians and dancers their start. Among those who began their singing careers on “Star Search” are Christina Aguilera and Beyoncé and Justin Timberlake and Britney Spears. David Slater won Star Search in 1987. He signed with Capitol Records and launched a country music career, but also he sings pop & jazz standards made famous by Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, and Nat King Cole among others. He went on to be a popular contemporary Christian singer, as well. On his CD “You are the Words and the Music” he sings: “Have you seen Jesus my Lord?”

My experience with contemporary Christian music is limited to being a pilgrim and on staff at Cursillo, and we sang “Have you seen Jesus my Lord” many times. In the last two weeks since Easter Day, I have seen Jesus my Lord a number of times, and I can answer affirmatively to David Slater’s question: “Have you seen Jesus my Lord?” After all, “He’s here in plain view.”

In the Gospel reading for today, Jesus was in plain view, and yet his closest friends didn’t recognize him. Emmaus was seven miles west of Jerusalem.¹ It was sunset, and they were walking towards the dazzling sun. Perhaps that is why they didn’t know it was Jesus. Or it could have been that they were preoccupied with their own problems? They were dealing with their sorrow at Jesus’s death and the disappointment in the hopes and dreams they had for themselves and the world were shattered. They thought that Jesus was the one “who was going to rescue Israel.”² They couldn’t imagine that they might see him as they walked from

Jerusalem to Emmaus. While the others were gathered – or were in hiding – on that third day since our Lord was crucified, Cleopas and his friend were thinking and talking about only one thing – the crucifixion. And the stranger they met had not heard the news? It was the only thing people were talking about in Jerusalem. Earlier that same day the disciples had heard the news that Jesus’s tomb was empty. The women had reported a vision. They had seen angels who told them that their Lord was alive, but no one believed their story. The two men were wondering where their Lord’s body was. What if the women’s story was true? They could be on their way to spread the news? Though it would have been an incomplete story. And they were with Jesus at that very moment but didn’t recognize him. They invited him to stay with them, and they shared a meal. It was then that they recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread. To be sure it sounds very like the sacrament, but it was an “ordinary meal in an ordinary house when an ordinary loaf was divided” that our Lord was revealed to them.³

I wonder...do we recognize Jesus’s presence among us? We meet him not only at the communion rail. We can be with Christ at the dinner table too. “He is not only the host in his Church; he is a guest in every home.”⁴ Does our busy-ness keep us from being – really being – with our Lord? Can we see Jesus at work among us? Do we see him loving and caring for us or just being by our side – in good times and in trying times and the everyday times?

The story of seeing Jesus on the road to Emmaus story is one of the most well known in the New Testament. I have a story about seeing Jesus, too; it is really our son Troy’s story. Aunt Weebish lived with us the last seven years of her life. She was Jim’s aunt and Godmother. Jim was in Orlando for a meeting, and I planned to take her to meet Jim there and go to Disney World. She had always wanted to go there but thought she was too old and infirm. I told her that with her in her wheelchair we would go to the front of every line. Our son Troy was her primary caregiver, and he was going with us. Weeb could be a handful, so we thought we

would share the load. Well, Hurricane Joanna came ashore on the Florida coast and went straight across Florida near Orlando and into the Atlantic, where she came directly towards us on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Jim flew home in a lull between Joanna's landfalls. We all needed a respite from the demands of being caretakers, so Jim and I went to Williamsburg and Troy and Weebish went to her former home in Dallas where she got to visit with old friends. And he took her to the Texas State Fair. He parked in the handicapped parking and turned her wheelchair around to take her over the electric cords at the ticket booth. They did all the exhibits in the Ag Tents. Weeb loved the fluffy chickens and the French lopped-eared bunnies. They ate carnival food – fried everything. It was almost sunset when they started to leave. The lights were twinkling bright and colorful on the rides by then. Troy turned her chair around to bump over the cords again at the exit, and she looked up and asked "Troy, what's that?" He said: "It is a Ferris wheel, Weeb." She said: "O, I haven't been on one of those since I was a girl." Troy said: "You wanna go?" So Troy took her on the Ferris wheel. She laughed and laughed...and then the Ferris wheel stopped for what seemed like an eternity. Troy knew he could get her down if she cooperated, but with her advanced dementia, he was concerned that even with a rescue wire on him he might not be able to get them to safety. Well, the Ferris wheel had actually stopped for entertainment reasons not because of a malfunction. The car below them was actually a cage filled with trained birds. When released they would fly about and then into the amphitheater. Now Weeb had been an Audubon bird counter, and she loved birds so that must have been a real treat for her, having the birds fly all around her on the Ferris wheel. She threw her head back watching and laughing. After the birds circled and then swooped into the open air theatre, the Ferris wheel started up again. When they were on the ground, Troy picked her up, still laughing, and carried her to her wheelchair. When Troy got to the gate again, he turned her around at the gate again, she looked up, and asked: "What's that Troy?" Through

tears he answered: “It’s a Ferris wheel, Weeb.” She said: “O, I haven’t been on one of those since I was a child.” And he said: “Want to go, Weeb?” So they went on the Ferris wheel again.

Do you recognize Jesus in Troy’s story?

Maybe you’ve seen the Lord at sunset looking at the sky mellowing red.

Have you ever stood in the Gulf with white foam forming at the shore and felt the endless thundering motion of the waves at your feet?

Have you ever stood in the midst of your family and seen the face of Christ on each other’s faces? Then you have seen Jesus, my Lord.

Look around at this your church family. Jesus is here among us. Can you see Jesus, our Lord? He’s here in plain view.

May we learn to recognize him in one another, but if not now surely when we break bread together.

Risen Lord, may it be so.

Amen.

¹ The 1st century historian Josephus’s account it is a village close to Jerusalem that now is a town called Motza. Josephus Falius’s most important works were *The Jewish War* (c. 75) and *Antiquities of the Jews* (c. 94). *The Jewish War* recounts the Jewish revolt against Roman occupation (66–70). *Antiquities of the Jews* recounts the history of the world from a Jewish perspective for an ostensibly Roman audience. These works provide valuable insight into first century Judaism and the background of Early Christianity.

² William Barclay on Luke 24, “The Sunset Road that Turned to Dawn.” See <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dsb/luke-24.html>.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*