



3rd Sunday of Easter
4 May 2025

What Is It Like to Be at the Table with the Resurrected?

Ascension Lth. Church
Pastor Chris

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our risen Lord and Savior Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Last Sunday I went to worship at another church. Planning for the 2027 Youth Gathering in Minneapolis, MN has begun, and on Sunday morning, we took advantage of worshipping in a church in our host city. The organ was majestic, the songs were okay – two of them were too hard to sing. Communion was bread and wine. Children played in a kid's area to the left of the altar. But other than the lilies and the white paraments on the altar – it would have been difficult to know we were still celebrating the season of Easter. Not once, in an hour and five minutes of worship did we hear, "Christ is risen!" Not once did we shout, "he is risen indeed!" Are you kidding? We get so caught up in Easter, here at Ascension, I sometimes think we should include the shouts of resurrection joy every in every Sunday worship, at every baptism, and every time we gather for a funeral to give thanks to God for the life of someone we love. Hold that thought.

Just two weeks into this Easter season and the joyous shouts of Alleluia have begun to quiet, if not silence completely, as we have begun to move back into the rhythms of our "normal"—moving from one activity to the next—from one day to the next. Back to work, back to school, back to practice, back to the normal hubbub as if nothing is different with the celebration of the resurrection of our Savior just 14 days ago. As if there is nothing to give us joy in the days ahead. Why leave Easter so soon? Why leave the empty tomb so quickly to run back to our weary and uneventful lives when the greatest event in the history of the world has just taken place once again in our hearts to remind us of the great promise of resurrection joy? The resurrection is the event that gives us the promise of eternal life and many of us are ready to be done with all of the shouting and crying, laughing and celebrating as we move farther and farther away from Easter Day.

And then the Alleluias disappear altogether. Sure, we have the occasional one in the communion liturgy or some song—but for the most part "Alleluia" becomes just one more word in a mix of words we hear each Sunday. What happens to the joy? If Easter stands as this great testament to God's glory, as only the resurrection of Jesus can—what happens to the joy? And where do we go from here? When we move back into our everyday lives—where do we find the joy? On the day after Easter, parents and grandparents in this very room are afraid for their children and grandchildren who identify as trans—where's the joy? On the day after Easter Ukraine and Russia are still at war—where's the joy? On the day after Easter Gaza is still in ruins and hostages still have not come home—where's the joy? On the day after Easter people are still looking for a safe place to lay their head - where's the joy? Somehow, Alleluia doesn't seem to be enough the day after Easter. And suddenly, I begin to understand why the alleluias don't last very long. Where do we find the joy of Easter in the midst of the world we live in, the day after Easter? And is it possible to find that joy - as we look to what the days after Easter will bring? In Lent we spend forty days moving towards the cross—but we know that the joy of Easter morning is around the corner. With the arrival of Easter - the fifty days of celebration often seem to be clouded by the life we return to after Easter Sunday is over.

Little Leroy came into the kitchen where his mother was making dinner. His birthday was coming up and he thought this was a good time to tell his mother what he wanted. "Mom, I want a bike for my birthday." Little Leroy was a bit of a troublemaker. He had gotten into trouble at school and at home. Leroy's mother asked him if he thought he deserved to get a bike for his birthday. Little Leroy, of course, thought he did. Leroy's mother, being a Christian woman, wanted Leroy to reflect on his behavior over the last year. "Go to your room, Leroy, and think about how you have behaved this year. Then write a letter to God and tell him why you deserve a bike for your birthday." Little Leroy stomped up the steps to his room and sat down to write God a letter.

- Letter 1 Dear God: I have been a very good boy this year and I would like a bike for my birthday. I want a red one.

Your friend, Leroy

Leroy knew that this wasn't true. He had not been a very good boy this year, so he tore up the letter and started over.

- Letter 2 Dear God: This is your friend, Leroy. I have been a pretty good boy this year and I would like a red bike for my birthday. Thank you. Your friend, Leroy

Leroy knew that this wasn't true, either. So, he tore up the letter and started again.

- Letter 3 Dear God: I have been an "OK" boy this year. I still would really like a red bike for my birthday. Leroy
- Leroy knew he could not send this letter to God either. So, Leroy wrote another letter.

- Letter 4 God, I know I haven't been a good boy this year. I am very sorry. I will be a good boy if you just send me a red bike for my birthday. Please! Thank you, Leroy



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Leroy knew, even if it was true, this letter was not going to help. By now, Leroy was very upset. He went downstairs and told his mom that he wanted to go to church. Leroy's mother thought her plan had worked as Leroy looked very sad. "Just be home in time for dinner," Leroy's mother told him. Leroy walked down the street to the church on the corner. Little Leroy went into the church and up to the altar. He looked around to see if anyone was there. Leroy bent down and picked up a statue of the Virgin Mary. He slipped it under his shirt and ran out of the church, down the street, into the house, and up to his room. He shut the door to his room and sat down with a piece of paper and a pen. Leroy began to write his fifth and final letter to God.

- God, I'VE GOT YOUR MAMA. IF YOU WANT TO SEE HER AGAIN, SEND THE BIKE. Signed, YOU KNOW WHO

Does it work? Little Leroy's plan, does it work? To beg God or push God into action by acting like Little Leroy. When we do not receive what we think we should—when we feel lost in a world of confusion—when the answers aren't what we want to hear—do we get anywhere by trying to hold God hostage? Or in Leroy's case, God's mother. Usually not. The question is not whether or not we are able to push God into doing what we want. God gave his only son to die for our sins—is that not enough? It absolutely is. But, what are we missing?

What we miss is how we see what God has already done in the cross and the empty tomb. How we see and what we do with the death and resurrection of Jesus. What do we do with the love and the joy now present in our lives after Easter Sunday? And the disciples—now fishermen again—what are they supposed to do? Where is the joy in returning to the life they once knew? For them Easter was as clear as their eyes could see. As tangible as their hands could touch. As definite as their ears could hear. Was it a dream? No—this Jesus, our master, our Savior really did rise from the dead. And now look, here we are fishing, and someone yells from the shore. Who is it? Who has come for a visit? Quick—to the shore! "It is the Lord," shouts another disciple and before you know it—Peter is in the water. Of course, Peter. Everybody else pulls in the catch of fish and grabs an oar. But they do not care—they are hungry for breakfast—and Jesus has brought it. More importantly they are hungry for the presence of Jesus. And on this morning, with the water lapping up against the sand—breakfast is served. And what a breakfast it is. Not only a hot meal after a long night on the Sea of Galilee but also a meal where the host is their risen Savior.

Their friend, their teacher, now eating with them - hosting the first meal of a new life. The Last Supper seems far away now. Not hidden in an upper room with only candlelight to give sight but now on the beach in the sunrise of morning where the disciples are able to see ever more clearly the wonder of their risen Lord. I do not know why so many of the resurrection appearances of Jesus have something to do with food, but they do. It happens twice in Luke—first on the road to Emmaus, where Jesus is made known to two of his disciples in the breaking of bread, and then later, when he appears to them all and eats a piece of broiled fish in their presence. Then there is this meal, which reminds us so clearly of that other meal by the Sea of Galilee where Jesus took five loaves and two fishes and fed everyone in sight. Maybe it is because eating is so necessary for life, and so is Jesus. Or maybe it is because sharing food is what makes us human. Most other species forage alone, so that feeding is a solitary business, but human beings seem to love eating together. It is, one of the clues to the presence of Jesus. There is always the chance, when we are eating together, that we will discover the risen Lord in our midst. The story is full of clues for those times when we feel too alone on the sea in the middle of the night, afraid that we have come to the end of something without any idea how to begin again.

So again, Jesus shows up – this time in a familiar place – by the water's edge – where the disciples had seen Jesus heal a man possessed by demons; where Jesus had walked on water; where Jesus calmed a storm; and where they had witnessed the feeding of 5000 with just a few pieces of fish and some bread. And then I wonder if that is when they finally understand. As they watched Jesus eat. As they enjoyed a piece of charcoal warmed bread and tasted the salty goodness of fish roasted over an open fire – was it in that moment that they remembered the miracle of God's abundance overwhelming all who sat on the beach that day so long ago? "It is the Lord!" That is what the beloved disciple said. How did he know? How do any of us know? By staying on the lookout, I guess. By watching the shore, and the sky, and each other's faces. By listening. By living in great expectation and refusing to believe that our nets will stay empty, or our nights will last forever. By remembering the stone rolled away and the sound of our name. For those with ears to hear, there is a voice that can turn all our dead ends into new beginnings. "Come," that voice says, "and have breakfast." Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.