

## *“Straight from the Heart”*

Third Sunday of Easter

**April 26, 2020**



### **Prepare**

*Rock, stone, or worry stone...Candle...Breakfast—bread, wine, cereal, cookie, milk*

### **Welcome - Announcements - Introduction**

After the events of Holy Week, the disciples are devastated. They are in the midst of full-blown grief and disbelief. Into the heart of that grief came a stunning revelation – life had overcome death. God’s faithfulness would build them up once again – will bind them together. Is this possible in our lives? Today’s worship will say, “Yes, it can! Come and See! Live and love! This is the heart of the matter!”

### **SPEND TIME**

Leader: We continue with our Easter Season because Easter isn’t just one day. We have an abundance of days to celebrate new life. The early church shared the abundance they had in this way:

*“Day by day, as they **spent much time together** in the temple, they **broke bread at home** and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, **praising God and having the goodwill** of all the people.” ACTS 2: 46-47A*

We create a “temple” of worship in our heart that connects us across boundaries, distance and time. But as we share this worship, we will stay connected. At the “heart of the matter” we are connected through the Spirit that makes us one in love.

### **Opening Act of Centering Our Hearts as One**

We are going to center our hearts as one to begin.

Let’s take a deep breath together. (*everyone breathes together*)

I invite you to place your hand on your heart;  
let’s lightly tap together in a slow heartbeat rhythm.



Holy Living God,  
Heartbeat of Creation,  
help us to take this time to center on you,  
for you made us,  
you gave us life,  
and you continue to be with us  
every moment

*(wait a couple of beats)*  
every breath  
*(wait a couple of beats)*  
every step.  
*(the heartbeat tapping fades away)*

Hear this assurance from God  
*(sing to the tune of Amazing Grace...)*

**Be still, O heart, you're not alone, your beat is shared with me.  
Come now, and calm, and center here, you're mine, secure and free.**

Let's take another deep breath, making sure our shoulders and any tension  
we feel in our bodies is letting go with the breath. *(Pause to breath)*

Let's take another one. *(Pause to breath)*

Let us pick up our heart stone, sometimes called a "worry stone,"  
and let our touch on its surface remind us that God's touch  
is within us, between us, and around us.

As close and real as this object is in our hands right now,  
is how close Love is to us always.

Let us imagine letting go of our worries for now into God's heart of love.

We offer a prayer song of letting go:

*(sing to the tune of Amazing Grace...)*

**Into your care, we offer now, our worries, fears and strife.  
We turn to you and know you're near – Your light, our love and life.**

*MUSIC*

Let's light our candles now and set our heart worry stones or rock next to it.  
*Light the candle(s) you have on your table and put your stone(s) around the base of it.*

## **BREAK BREAD Blessing the Meal**

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION:

Leader: Loving God,

All: **we confess that at times we do not share in the joy of the resurrection but are caught in the worries of the world. We confess that we do not always live in the spirit of new life but remain discontent, grumbling and anxious. Forgive us for not sharing in the Good News. Forgive us when we find it more comfortable to worry and complain than to risk the joy and encouragement of new life in Christ. Call us back to your ways, O God, to seek hope and reconciliation, restoration and peace.** *(silence)*

Leader: Christ is Risen! The stone is rolled away, the tomb found empty. Mary calls out, "I have seen the Lord!" We have seen Christ, too, in every helping hand, in every heartfelt gift, in every choice to restore life in this world. We are called to this new life, a life of forgiveness

and reconciliation. You are forgiven; accept your forgiveness and know that God loves you and desires great joy for your life. Walk forward on this journey of faith, knowing your brothers and sisters are with you. All: Amen.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION *(together)*

***In the night in which he was betrayed,  
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;  
broke it, and gave it to his disciples,  
saying: Take and eat; this is my body,  
given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.***

***Again, after supper, he took the cup,  
gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink,  
saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood,  
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.***

LORD'S PRAYER *(together)*

***Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.***

Leader. We're going to share a story today about another meal that Jesus attended. Because it happened in an unexpected way, listen for how people didn't recognize him at first. It took sitting down to the table for people to realize that Christ was with them still. Every time we gather around a table, we can recognize that Christ is with us, inside each one of us every time we love each other by sharing food together. Let us pray this "repeat after me prayer"...

Holy and Surprising God,  
**Holy and Surprising God** *(repeat the next lines in this way)*  
We gather in your name...  
invited by Jesus...  
bound together with your Spirit...  
in union with each other...  
Feed our bodies and our spirits...  
with your comforting presence...  
so that we might be your comfort to others...  
Bless this food...  
and break open our hearts...  
Bless this drink...  
and pour out your love...  
Amen...



And now I invite you to pick something (bread and wine) from the table and let us say the one word that is at the heart of the matter in every blessing we do at our tables, repeating after me...

*(with gusto)*

**“Grateful!”**

**“Grateful!”**

Let us begin to “break bread” while we “break open the Word” in our scriptures.  
*Begin to serve & eat even breakfast as the next scriptures & thoughts are shared*

## **Breaking Open the Word with Scripture**

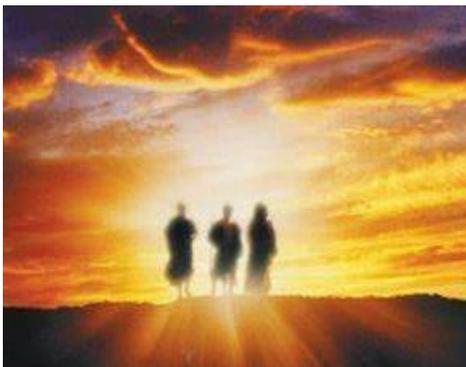
Leader: Here is how the story of Jesus’ surprise visit on the road and at the dinner happened. Imagine yourself walking down the road and a stranger comes alone...

Reader: *On that same day, two disciples were traveling to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking to each other about everything that had happened. While they were discussing these things, Jesus himself arrived and joined them on their journey. They were prevented from recognizing him.*

*He said to them, “What are you talking about as you walk along?” They stopped, their faces downcast. The one named Cleopas replied, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who is unaware of the things that have taken place there over the last few days?”*

*He said to them, “What things?”*

*They said to him, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth. Because of his powerful deeds and words, he was recognized by God and all the people as a prophet. But our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him.*



*We had hoped he was the one who would redeem Israel. All these things happened three days ago. But there’s more: Some women from our group have left us stunned. They went to the tomb early this morning and didn’t find his body. They came to us saying that they had even seen a vision of angels who told them he is alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women said. They didn’t see him.”*

*Then Jesus said to them, “You foolish people! Your dull minds keep you from believing all that the prophets talked about. Wasn’t it necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” Then he interpreted for them the things written about himself in all the scriptures, starting with Moses and going through all the Prophets.*

*When they came to Emmaus, he acted as if he was going on ahead. But they urged him, saying, “Stay with us. It’s nearly evening, and the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them. After he took his seat at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened and they recognized him,*

*but he disappeared from their sight. They said to each other, “Weren’t our hearts on fire when he spoke to us along the road and when he explained the scriptures for us?”*

*They got up right then and returned to Jerusalem. They found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying to each other, “The Lord really has risen! He appeared to Simon!” Then the two disciples described what had happened along the road and how Jesus was made known to them as he broke the bread. -LUKE 24:13-35*

**Leader:** After Christ was no longer with his disciples in the flesh, several letters began to circulate making the rounds to the early Christian communities. This one is from a letter called “First Peter” that is recorded in the New Testament. It reminds people that the story of Jesus is about new birth for all people, and we are to be seeds of God’s living, giving love.

**Reader:** *Christ was chosen before the creation of the world but was only revealed at the end of time. This was done for you, who through Christ are faithful to the God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory. So now, your faith and hope should rest in God.*

*As you set yourselves apart by your obedience to the truth so that you might have genuine affection for your fellow believers, love each other deeply and earnestly. Do this because you have been given new birth—not from the type of seed that decays but from seed that doesn’t. This seed is God’s life-giving and enduring word.*

**Leader:** Jesus’ table ministry was a preeminent way that he showed and shared a depth of love unseen in his time. He ate and spent time with those considered unworthy of his attention. Even in his post-resurrection appearances, it was in the breaking of bread that he was “recognized”—perhaps because so many times in his ministry, it was at tables that he invited people to open up and share “straight from the heart”—getting right to the heart of the matter. As we gather this day, we remember that, at the heart, his message was unconditional love. To offer ourselves “straight from the heart” is the seed he planted in us, and this is the growth we must continue to nurture.

## **Action Response**

**Leader:** I invite you to put your hands on your heart, close your eyes for just a moment, and think about a message of love. Then reach out and connect your hands with those who are with you, around or across the table. If you are alone, reach out your hands to your sides and imagine two people on either side of you who you want to offer love to right now. You can reach out with text or call later to let them know you are thinking of them at this moment. In this moment, we just let this gesture plant more seeds of love, straight from the heart. *[pause to allow time to do this gesture]*

## **Breaking Open our Lives with Discussion**

**Leader:** Our theme scripture says, “they ate their food with glad and generous hearts.” One way we can be glad and generous is to share about how we are finding strength, hope, love and peace in these days. This is part of “breaking bread” with each other as we break open our hearts to one another as well. This week, since Jesus has said he wants us to feel peace, let’s talk about peace.

What have you found yourself saying to people “straight from the heart”  
in the last few weeks that you didn’t say as much before?  
Have you heard or seen something this week that felt loving?  
Or if you can’t think of something from this week,  
what do you have in your memory as something that was loving?  
Take some time at your table to talk about these questions or journal.

Complete this sentence, “I see Love shared (in/when/where) \_\_\_\_\_.

## **Breaking Open our Hearts with Prayer**

Leader: It is difficult in this moment not to be near some of the people we love and might be worried about. Take a moment and say out loud the names of people you wish were right there next to you at your table today. As we name them, they are present with us in our hearts.

We also want to call to mind, the people we cannot name, whose names we do not know. But we know they need our prayers and God’s comfort.

For those who have lost loved ones  
For those who are sick and recovering  
For those who are caring for loved ones who are sick at home  
For those who are caring for persons in medical care  
For those who are separated from loved ones  
For those who are feeling alone and isolated  
For those who are helping and are so very tired  
For those who are struggling to find friends, food, and comfort  
For those who are afraid

Leader: Let us take another breath of Spirit as our “Amen.” We know that God sends out our prayers and the Spirit, Breath of God, is blowing from within us outward, as a Spirit of Compassion and Presence.

## **Praise God!**

It is time to praise God and raise our endorphin levels to improve our heart-health, both physically and spiritually! So whether your “dance” is in your bed, in your chair, or all over the living room, it’s time for the Easter Season Dance Party! If you are going to dance standing up, go ahead and get ready. And let’s start with this affirmation, repeating after me (*with some energy!*)

We know Jesus is present among us... *[repeat]*  
even in this very home... *[repeat]*  
We will not let fear be louder than love... *[repeat]*  
but with glad hearts and rejoicing souls... *[repeat]*  
we will sing God’s praise... *[repeat]*  
for we are Easter People! ...*[repeat]*

## Have Goodwill

That was great! I hope you feel some good vibes right now. So while we have our energy up, let's decide to send some energy out to the world that needs it! What message does the world need? Perhaps you will decide to create a way to let more and more people know the message of Christ, "You are not alone. I am here. I love you straight from the heart." What can we do to create more love in our household, in our family, in our relationships with those we cannot be with right now? How can we offer love to those who are working so hard right now? How can we offer love to those who feeling short on love, peace or comfort? Make your own plan today.

Here is another idea: Third Sunday of Easter - Straight from the Heart. Find a box or grocery bag to collect food donations for the next few weeks. Use markers or paints to decorate it with symbols of love. Include messages and intentions like "straight from the heart" or "feast of love." Go through your pantry and take out things you wish to donate. The next time you go to the grocery store, intentionally purchase items to add to your food donation collection. When you place any items in the box/bag, say a prayer of thanks for those that prepared it, and a prayer of goodwill for those who will eat it. And as we blessed our meal in worship, bless this good - hold it and say "grateful!" Contact our local food pantry or food bank to find out when and where you can donate

## Blessing

*(based on Psalm 16)*



As we close this time together, remember:  
God is always with you. No matter what you face,  
no matter what trials or hardships come your way,  
God is right beside you, whispering  
"Peace be with you,"  
guiding and directing your path.  
So do not live in fear, but in joy.  
Take heart! This is the heart of the matter.  
**Amen.**

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### REMEMBER IN PRAYER

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