

Last week we said that everything had changed with the resurrection

But I want to explore that more specifically—What happened? What changed?
50 days after Easter is Pentecost, which by our calendar this year is May 15, 2016
Between now and May 15 we will explore what transpired in those 50 days
We will culminate with looking at what happened on Pentecost on May 15

The truth is that nobody recognizes Jesus after the resurrection

They are all so caught up in their grief and in their determination to care for Jesus' body
That they are simply trying to make sense of the fact that Jesus is missing
Why? Who took him? What have they done with him? Please tell us!
When they first heard reports that Jesus was alive—they didn't believe them
They thought people were making it up—it could not possibly be true
When they see him, they think Jesus is the gardener, a stranger, or a ghost

The women found the empty tomb first and are told that Jesus is risen

—but they left afraid and bewildered—confused
Peter and John run to the tomb and find it empty—John believes—but they don't understand
Mary Magdalene thinks he is a gardener—until he calls her by name
Two men are walking home to Emmaus, discouraged and disheartened—when Jesus joins them
Though they talk for a long time, they don't recognize him until he breaks bread
Jesus appears when the disciples are gathered—they think he is a ghost—except he eats food
Thomas gets the bad rap as a doubter—but they all doubt—until Jesus shows them his wounds
Even though they have seen Jesus—they are confused and bewildered by what it all means
Peter and 5 disciples go fishing—Jesus appears, increases the catch and cooks breakfast

It isn't until they recognize a familiar gesture— breaking bread

inviting the disciples to try another catch
calling them by name

That his friends know it is Jesus and that he is with them again

It is a mystery—and no less a mystery today than it was for the friends and disciples of Jesus

I don't understand the resurrection—or the virgin birth—or how Jesus is both divine and human
But I believe it to be true

There is much of the spiritual life I don't understand in my world today
I don't understand how I can know what God is saying to me—yet I'm learning I do know
I don't understand why some prayers are answered and others aren't

But I have seen dramatic answers to prayer and recognized my words were met
I don't understand how I know that God is with me—yet I have felt the Presence of God
There is so much I don't know or understand—but I believe that God is real and that Jesus lives

It is a mystery—and I embrace the mystery—I live with the tension of not knowing—I trust

I'm learning to Listen less with my ears and more with the voice within

I'm learning to follow the living Christ, my present teacher on this journey

I don't necessarily understand the path—but I trust the Presence that is with me
In that I find a place I can rest and be at peace

The Appearance by the Sea

When it was already light, there stood Jesus on the shore, though the disciples did not realize it was Jesus. Jesus called out, "Haven't you caught anything, friends?" And when they answered, "No," he said, "Throw the net out to starboard and you'll find something." So they threw the net out and could not haul it in because of the quantity of the fish. The disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." At these words, "It is the Lord," Simon Peter tied his outer garment around him (for he had nothing on) and jumped into the water. The other disciples came on in the boat, towing the net with the fish; they were only about a hundred yards from land.

—John 21:4-8

Even the Resurrection Is Hidden

What is most striking about the resurrection stories is that the resurrection of Jesus is described as a hidden event. When we speak about the hidden life of Jesus we have to go far beyond his years at Nazareth. The great mystery of Jesus' life is that all of it has a hidden quality. First of all, his conception and birth, then his many years living in obedience to his parents, then his so-called public life in which he kept asking those he cured not to speak about their healing, then his death outside the walls of Jerusalem between two criminals, and finally also his resurrection. Indeed, the resurrection of Jesus is not a glorious victory over his enemy. It is not a proof of his powers. It is not an argument against those who condemned him to death. Jesus did not appear to Annas, Caiaphas, Herod or Pilate, not even to his doubtful followers Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea. There is no gesture of "being right after all." There is no "I always told you so." There isn't even a smile of satisfaction.



Today I was thinking how nobody recognizes Jesus immediately. They think he is the gardener, a stranger, or a ghost. But when a familiar gesture is there again—breaking bread, inviting the disciples to try for another catch, calling them by name—his friends know he is there with them. Absence and presence are touching each other. The old Jesus is gone. They no longer can be with him as before. The new Jesus, the risen Lord, is there, intimately, more intimately than ever.³

"You believe because you can see me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."

—John 20:29



Detail of Jesus' disappearance in Emmaus

No, the most decisive event in the history of creation is a deeply hidden event. Jesus appears as a stranger. Mary of Magdala sees a stranger in the garden. Cleopas and his friend find themselves walking with a stranger to Emmaus. The disciples see a stranger coming and think it is a ghost, and Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, John, James and two other disciples hear a stranger calling out to them from the shore of a lake. How much of a stranger Jesus remains is succinctly expressed in that mysterious moment around the charcoal fire when Jesus offers bread and fish to his friends. John the Evangelist writes, "None of the disciples was bold enough to ask, 'Who are you?' They knew quite well it was the Lord" (John 21:12). Nowhere better than in this sentence is expressed the hiddenness of Jesus' resurrection. They knew who was giving them bread and fish, but didn't dare ask who he was. The difference between knowing and not knowing, presence and absence, revealing and hiding, have been transcended in the presence of the risen Lord.⁴