

### Easter 3B: Acts 312-19, Psalm 4, 1 John 3:1-7, Luke 24:36b-48

What a week of photos and stories from people who were **there**, somewhere along the path of totality in the U.S, stretching from Texas on up to Vermont. Schools closed. Work paused. I heard from a few different groups of friends who sent photos soon after it was over: the eclipse glasses perched on their noses, legs stretched out on lawn chairs, gazing upwards. Is there anyone here this morning who happened to see it? Who was actually **there**—near or on the path of totality last Monday, April 8? Here, in the midst of a very gray day, I might describe this solar eclipse as underwhelming, although back on August 21, 2017, I lived 35 minutes from the path of totality in Oregon. Two friends from California and a friend from Chicago (who brought a friend of his from Austria) all arrived at our house the day before. We ended up on a grassy knoll in Basket Slough National Wildlife Refuge, just outside of Salem. People had been gathering all night, parking their campers, spreading out their picnic blankets with sleeping bags to stay warm, checking out prime spots for setting up their telescopes.

Early in the morning, more and more people started arriving and by 9:00 a.m. or so, people were talking in groups, sharing tips on how to get the best photos, making sure their eclipse glasses were ready, with everyone keeping a watchful eye on the sky. It was one of those very rare occasions where we all knew we were going to be witnessing something extraordinary, although none of us knew exactly what to expect. Our anticipation was unifying. And even as the moon and sun started overlapping and the light changed, there was no preparation for the two minute-plus experience of totality: not only did it darken to a pre-dawn-like state, but the temperature dropped, the air was instantly chilled without the warmth of the sun. Even now, what stands out is the quiet. People were completely hushed, the hundreds or thousands of us all waiting and watching. And it wasn't just the people, but the birds, who had been chattering and singing from the trees all around, went completely silent for those two-plus minutes. It was as if all of creation was in awe, witnesses to something extraordinary.

Although we are in week three of Easter, this Sunday is our first resurrection story according to the gospel of Luke. Mark's gospel, if you remember from Easter Day, ends with the women going to the tomb, finding it empty, and despite being told, "Don't be alarmed!" were (of course) highly alarmed. They ran away, and told no one what they had seen. Next up (last week) we heard the story of Doubting Thomas from John's gospel. That's when Jesus appears to the disciples, even though they have locked themselves in a room and are in hiding because they are petrified of what might happen to them. Jesus speaks his first post-resurrection words, "Peace be with you," and breathes on them. In that same gospel, we heard how a week later, they were *still* in a room. The doors might not have been locked, but they were still shut. Jesus says the same thing, "Peace be with you." And now today, Luke.

When I am reading a book, put it down for a week or two and then circle back to it, I typically need to go back to re-read some parts of it, to remind myself where I am in the story. What was going on in the narrative before I put the book down to get ready for Trash and Treasure? I especially have to do this if it is a mystery. What are the details

that I need to capture again that might be important clues? Because we are landing in Luke this morning without the benefit of hearing from that gospel over the past few weeks, I went back to remind myself. This is actually the third resurrection story in Luke. Here is what leads to this moment, this morning: the women had gone to the tomb at the crack of dawn, discovered the missing body, and seen two people surrounded in dazzling light who said, “Why are you looking for the Living One here in a cemetery?” (*The Message*) In Luke, they don’t run away but go back and tell everyone their story, although that particular story ends with Peter very puzzled by the Mystery of the Message and the Missing Body.

Next, two of their companions were on that road to Emmaus, where they ended up walking with someone else on the road and invited him to have supper with them. You know the rest of this Encounter with the Mysterious Stranger—how their eyes were opened and they, too, told everyone what they had experienced. This is where we come in today: the disciples are gathered in some undisclosed location, abuzz with all the news of what they’ve been hearing. And while they are trying to put together the clues about what happened, Jesus appears in their midst and the mystery is upended. They thought the mystery was about what happened to Jesus’s body, but the completely unexpected twist turned out to be about how God, once again, broke free of all the constraints and limitations we impose. And how suffering and death, which were all-too real for Jesus and are all-too real for humans and all living things, do not have the last word. And how people who are mostly afraid a lot of the time end up becoming witnesses to the way of love. Witnesses to rising and transformation. This is the real mystery and it isn’t something that gets solved. It is something that is witnessed, like a solar eclipse. You know it, when you see resurrection and you experience resurrection.

Like any good mystery, this gospel is peppered with clues about how transformation happens: receiving peace, touching Jesus’s hands and feet—those outward parts of his body that had been most wounded. Those hands and feet are like a sacrament, an outward, visible sign of an inward, invisible grace, so there is something about resurrection and transformation that are intimately connected to not just recognizing, but embracing the most wounded parts of Jesus, ourselves, others, and creation. Turning towards love, forgiveness, eating with one another (whether we’re crunching on broiled fish together or sharing a meal at this table). These are all clues about what leads to transformation.

What isn’t made apparent in our reading this morning, but is clear if you go back and read the three stories of resurrection in Luke at one sitting—of the women at the tomb, the encounter with Jesus on the Road to Emmaus, and this moment when Jesus comes into their midst—is that they all happen on the same day. And, the implication is that that day of resurrection has never ended. It is still the same day. So we aren’t just hearing about or remembering this mystery of Easter. We are fully in it! Those in the Thursday night confirmation, reception and baptism class have been reading *Your Faith, Your Life: An Invitation to the Episcopal Church*, Jenifer Gamber and Bill Lewellis. The last chapter has a few things to say about this mystery of Easter and becoming transformed witnesses to the risen Christ: *When you allow God to find you and bring*

*you out of hiding, you are on the verge of a religious experience [everything]. (p. 166)*  
*Getting tangled up with God will have implications you've not yet considered. (p. 166)*  
*Be one on whom nothing is lost. Especially grace...Be attentive. Be in Love. (p.*  
*188) The Eucharist changes us; when we return to the communion table [this week],*  
*we bring with us the experience of having lived as the Body of Christ in our lives. (p.*  
*169) So we are already changed from last week. And we will be changed again this*  
*week.*