

Wicker Park Lutheran Church
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If you're like me, you're probably going on a lot of walks. Whether it's a 20 minute one around the block and through the park or just a quick jaunt to the mailroom, those walks have become a highlight of my otherwise monotonous days. Yet, again, if you're like me, those same walks are now becoming part of the monotony. With the lakeshore closed, the handful of walks are becoming a bit boring. I'm getting to the point where I think I could walk these paths with my eyes closed. I am longing to be out in nature, out at the lakefront, to see that brilliant turquoise color of lake Michigan, to sit on the rocks and dip my toes in the ice-cold water, to hang a hammock and read a book while listening and feeling the cool wind. All of these were essential to my mental and spiritual health. I feel a little empty without them. And so I continue these familiar walks, grieving the sights of the lake and becoming hopeless about when I will next be able to walk on its shore.

The disciples in today's story are walking with that same sort of emptiness, that same sort of hopelessness and grief. They're walking trying to make sense of the insensible, the death of the one who was supposed to be The One and the claim they heard that he has risen, testimonies of the impossible and unbelievable. And in that moment, Jesus arrives, though their eyes were kept from noticing him.

I can't help but wonder what is keeping them from seeing. Is he disguised like the gardener that Mary encountered? Or is it rather that the grief of the disciples is making them unable to see? I mean, they just witnessed a traumatic event, I would think it would indeed be impossible to see *anything but their despair*.

I can resonate with this experience and I'm guessing you can too. Even on these walks around my block, the feelings of hopelessness, grief, and anxiety are first on my mind. My focus is dodging people on the sidewalk as I struggle to breathe through the mask I wear. My longing for the lakefront, longing to breathe truly fresh air, longing to have my

smile seen by the strangers and friends I pass, knowing that, for many, my smile could be the only they see all day. My focus is on the uncertainty of these times, when will I next be able to stop and talk on the sidewalk? What comes next? When will I get a call to a church? When will I be able to see my family? These thoughts swirl in my mind, making me unable to notice the ways in which the risen Christ is greeting me, walking with me.

But something then whispers softly to me, drawing my eyes to trees where I see baby birds in a nest and squirrels scurrying branch to branch then to the ground where I notice snowdrops and daffodils and forsythia (for-sith-ia) and crocuses and magnolias blooming in their bright, beautiful colors. It's as if the Spirit is calling to me, "notice, notice, notice. Notice the life around you."

Perhaps it is the same Spirit that pulled on the disciples, encouraging them to ask Jesus - a complete stranger - to stay with them instead of going on his way. I imagine the Spirit whispering to them softly "invite him. Invite him."

And, it turns out, this invitation makes all the difference. This invitation reveals to them that Christ has been walking with them the entire time. And it is in the gifts of creation...the grapes of the wine, the wheat of the bread, the voice of a stranger...their eyes are opened, and they see Life...the veil of their grief is lifted, and they see the risen Christ...they experience the reality of the resurrection in their midst.

When we celebrated the Easter Vigil two weeks ago, I shared that it is hard celebrating and bearing witness to the resurrection while we are living in this Good Friday world. It is hard to see the resurrection in *our* midst, when the veil of grief, joblessness, sickness, anxiety, and death covers our eyes.

But, friends, I'm going to echo those same whispers of the Spirit that tugged at my heart that day, "notice. Notice. Notice." Because the beautiful thing about the resurrection, the beautiful thing about our God, is that She shows up in hidden and unexpected way, even when we cannot notice it, joining us on all of our journeys.

These glimpses for me are those flowers, those baby birds, those scurrying squirrels. These glimpses are shouting greetings across the street to strangers. These glimpses are in the grape of the wine and the wheat of the bird that sit on my makeshift home altar. These glimpses were the raindrops on my forehead yesterday, reminding me of my baptism. These glimpses are the ordinary things of our creation that have become images of resurrection, that have become holy. Or, rather, have always been holy and are now revealing their true nature.

...Jesus revealed himself to the disciples, their eyes were open to the reality of resurrection, and “that same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, ‘the Lord has risen indeed!’” The disciples through the course of this passage gone from being grief-stricken to joyful to inspired evangelists. To share that, even in the grief of that day, the risen Lord could be revealed.

The day I went on that walk, filled with grief and anxiety...saw the flowers and, next, I picked them and laid them on my altar for the Easter Vigil service in order to share the signs of the resurrection that I experienced with y’all – to share that, in these ordinary flowers, “I have seen the risen Lord!”

This week we will have a time of devotion about God revealing Godself to us in our daily life and on our walks. I invite you to join us, to walk with us, and, perhaps, **just maybe** have Christ revealed to you anew in those ordinary yet sacramental experiences of budding flowers, scurrying animals, raindrops, and conversation. And, if you’re willing, share with us a snapshot of that glimpse so that we can become witnesses of the resurrection to one another...

Because, the thing is, though I can see glimpses every-so-often, they are only glimpses...brief glimpses before the veil of grief and anxiety returns...before I remember we are still living in this COVID world and the weight of it is too much. So, the veil falls

again to be lifted once again through the gift of creation outside my window, the raindrops of baptism, and the grape and wheat of Eucharist.

But, you see, we can provide those glimpses for one another, too. They say the most beautiful thing about being gathered in church community is that when we say the creed, for example, we can hold on faith for those who cannot at this time.

Perhaps a way we can continue to hold onto faith for those of us who are still living in Good Friday - those whose veils are not lifted or those unable to leave their homes - even during this time of social distancing, is by sharing these glimpses with one another. And so, we encourage you to tell us this story. Post on social media with #resurrectwplc and tag Wicker Park Lutheran or send to photos@wickerparklutheran.org. Call a friend to share about the experience. Bring a flower home to your spouse, children, roommate, or place in front of a neighbor's door.

This is an opportunity for us to become proclaimers of resurrection even in a COVID-19, Good Friday world. To share hope for the hopeless. Or to receive hope from the hopeful. An opportunity to carry one another in love until the day where we can all again feel the power and reality of the resurrection.

Amen.