



## Third Sunday in Easter Sunday, April 26th, 2020

### Chasing the Horizon



**Composition VII - Kandinsky**

The abstract art you see above is by the Russian, Wassily Kandinsky, referred to as “Composition VII”. Kandinsky was a devoted Christian of the Eastern Orthodox tradition and an abstract artist of enormous capacity and imagination. As a Christian he was especially interested in Christian interpretations of the “end times”; what in Christianity we refer to as ‘eschatology’.

Composition VII is an artistic summation of a range of themes and stories from the Bible: Noah’s Ark, Jonah and the Whale, Christ’s resurrection and the four horsemen of the Apocalypse found in the Book of Revelation. What marked Kandinsky’s thought and art were the themes of death and rebirth, destruction and creation: what we might call *“living beyond the horizon”*, something he correctly sensed as he anticipated World War I but looked beyond to a resurrected Europe.

Today’s readings, in particular, the story of the Road to Emmaus, where the resurrected Christ appears to some of his disciples, as they walk together in despair after the crucifixion, points to “living beyond the horizon” where resurrection appears when it is least expected, not even contemplated.

## OUR GATHERING

### Announcements

#### Greeting

Christ is risen!

Sing a new song!

Sing praise to our still-laughing Easter God;  
*who has rolled away the limitations of yesterday.*

Immerse your anxiety and despair in the fountain of resurrection;  
for God takes ordinary things;  
*and makes them extraordinary.*

#### We turn our eyes to the Paschal Candle

We light the candle knowing that our faith in Jesus  
is sometimes strong,  
*sometimes elusive,*

Easter is the season when we thoughtfully celebrate  
*Christ breaking the bounds of death and hell*  
*Christ breaking the limitations of yesterday*

#### Hymn: And can it be (TiS 209, Sagina, Charles Wesley)

#### A Prayer, Confessing our Limitations on our Own Emmaus Road

Making sense of resurrection is very difficult, for it breaks apart those rational systems that we build to make sense of things. We can make so much more sense of Jesus and our own lives in the stories of his birth at Christmas, of his baptism (Epiphany) and of his work – what he teaches and what he does – but the story of resurrection takes us beyond our reasoning and comfort zones. It points us to a “beyond” that breaks into human experience, and of which it is difficult to make sense. Yet it stands there, questioning us and challenging us in its mystery and mysticism, but also in its tangibility. What follows is a prayer based on today’s gospel reading, Luke 24:13-35, of the Road to Emmaus.

What do I know of the Emmaus road,  
except that I think it passes not far from my church;  
runs through the local shopping mall,  
runs through the main street of town,

through the neighbourhoods where the houses  
stand amid the trees and shade;  
***runs almost anywhere today.***

What do I know of the Emmaus road,  
except that maybe those who walk on it;  
lonely in their grieving, stressed in their worrying,  
fearful and anxious and searching for hope,  
they look like me in the mirror some days,  
and sometimes they look like you,  
***like just about anybody today.***

What do I know of the Emmaus road,  
except that the place where Jesus meets us;  
where he shows up to walk and talk with us,  
to come into our kitchens and break bread with us,  
or where he reveals himself to us in the stranger,  
in the person we can't imagine as God's beloved,  
***that place could be almost any-place today.***

What do I know of the Emmaus road,  
except that I think I have some of the smell of it;  
soaking through to my skin when it rains;  
have some of the dust of it sticking right here  
on the leather of my worn-out shoes;  
and this morning, in this church, the light  
pouring in, ***isn't that Christ sitting next to me?***

***Amen***

**The Peace**

Christ is risen!

***He is risen indeed!***

## BREAKING OPEN THE WORD

### A Way into the Readings

The theological virtue of hope is the patient and trustful willingness to live without closure, without resolution, and still be content and even happy because our Satisfaction is now at another level, and our Source is beyond ourselves. **Richard Rohr**

We have always held to the hope, the belief, the conviction that there is a better life, a better world, beyond the horizon.  
**Franklin D. Roosevelt**

The true significance of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination  
**Albert Einstein**

Common sense is the collection of prejudices acquired by the age of eighteen  
**Albert Einstein**

### **Acts 2:14a, 36-41 (NRSV)**

One of the earliest interpretations of Jesus' resurrection was that God had raised Jesus from the dead in order to appoint him the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed one. Royal ideology also described the king as God's adopted son, and we see this, too, applied to Jesus. Luke will later use the royal adoption declaration of Psalm 2:7, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you" and apply it to Jesus (13:33), as did the author of Hebrews (1:5; 5:5). Paul, too, knows this early tradition, when he writes of Jesus being appointed Son of God at his resurrection (Rom 1:3-4). Very soon Christians found alternative ways of hailing Jesus' significance, which would have more relevance in a non-Jewish environment. These included speaking of Jesus as Son of God from his birth or even from eternity. Luke, however, true to his attempt to recreate Christian roots, brings one of its earliest acclamations about Jesus, summarised in 2:36.

<sup>14</sup>But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, <sup>36</sup>Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified."<sup>37</sup>Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" <sup>38</sup>Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you

will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup>For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” <sup>40</sup>And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” <sup>41</sup>So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

The word of the Lord  
***Thanks be to God***

### **Psalm 116: 1-4, 12-19 (NRSV)**

Today’s psalm is appropriate when read in the context of the Easter season for two reasons. First, it is a thanksgiving psalm, where thanks is offered to God for the deliverance of the psalmist. Secondly, the references to death and rescue from death in the psalm (see vv. 3, 8, 15) are suitable in the context of the resurrection of Jesus.

Two sections of the psalm are set for today, vv. 1-4 and 12-19. This reflects a very ancient practice of seeing the psalm as two psalms, vv. 1-9 and 10-19, as it is treated in the ancient Greek and Latin versions of the Old Testament. However, we should note the structure and elements that suggest the unity of the psalm. The psalm falls into three sections: vv. 1-7; 8-14; 15-19. Each begins with praise of the Lord, rehearses the trouble or difficulty experienced by the psalmist, and ends with thanksgiving and further praise. The same refrain concludes each of the last two sections (vv. 13b-14 and vv. 17b-18). Verse 7 could also be understood in parallel with this refrain.

<sup>1</sup>I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my supplications.

**<sup>2</sup>*Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.***

<sup>3</sup>The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish.

**<sup>4</sup>*Then I called on the name of the LORD: “O LORD, I pray, save my life!”***

<sup>12</sup>What shall I return to the LORD for all his bounty to me?

**<sup>13</sup>*I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD,***

<sup>14</sup>I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.

***15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful ones.***

***16 O LORD, I am your servant; I am your servant, the child of your serving girl. You have loosed my bonds.***

***17 I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice and call on the name of the LORD.***

***18 I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people,***

***19 in the courts of the house of the LORD, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the LORD!***

### **1 Peter 1:17-25 (J.B. Phillips New Testament)**

The passage belongs closely with what precedes it. 1:13-16 is a call to holiness, shaped appropriately for those who will first hear the letter. It assumes a former lifestyle "shaped by lusts/desires" to which they gave themselves in ignorance. The notion of living ignorantly in a lifestyle driven by strong desires is as applicable now as it was then. Where 1 Peter expounds this further it speaks of greed and sexual immorality. We might say: gratification at the expense of others. Gratification, pleasure, belongs to human experience and is something good. When it means bringing pain and disadvantage - let alone poverty! - to others, it is a distortion of what it means to be human. Finally, 1:17 highlights a negative quality in God's being: no favourites, no discrimination, no corruption. Turn it upside down and it means positive regard for all. So these former Gentiles are not second rate citizens. Then, as now, the principle confronts all kinds of discrimination based on gender, race, culture, religion, sexual orientation, age, ability/disability.

**17-21** If you pray to a Father who judges men by their actions without the slightest favouritism, then you should spend the time of your stay here on earth with reverent fear. For you must realise all the time that you have been "ransomed" from the futile way of living passed on to you by your fathers' traditions, not with some money payment of transient value, but by the costly shedding of blood. The price was in fact the life-blood of Christ, the unblemished and unstained lamb of sacrifice. It is true that God chose him to fulfil this part before the world was founded, but it was for your benefit that he was revealed in these last days—for you who found your faith in God through Christ. And God raised him from the dead and gave him unimaginable splendour, so that all your faith and hope might be centred in God.

## Luke 24:13-49 (Good News Translation)

The story of the Road to Emmaus invites participation. It is in the best sense a faith legend. The risen Jesus appears and just as suddenly disappears. We are not in the realm of a literal understanding of resurrection which would have Jesus brought back to life (like Lazarus) and living a normal life. It is not that Jesus was hiding behind the bushes and slipped in behind and then beside these two disciples while they were walking with his face half veiled to avoid recognition. It was not that he slipped out the door later while they were not looking. Here, Luke invites us to imagine something more mysterious: a materialising and dematerialising risen Jesus who makes appearances and then vanishes. This was consistent with how the early traditions understood Jesus' resurrection - and ours. It is the same person, embodied, but *now transformed or transfigured into a new way of being and being embodied*. Paul speaks of it in 1 Corinthians 15 as being a spiritual body, and what he means by that, is something newly embodied, not spiritual, as we moderns tend to use the word: something unembodied. In sum, the story of the Emmaus Road is about seeing reality differently. We can either understand the Scriptures as accounts, stories of things that once happened, but don't happen anymore, or as accounts, stories, that happened and continue to happen because God lives and loves. In essence, this story of the Emmaus Road is about seeing and living beyond the banal; as Christian theology calls it, *living on the horizon*.

<sup>13</sup> On that same day two of Jesus' followers were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, <sup>14</sup> and they were talking to each other about all the things that had happened. <sup>15</sup> As they talked and discussed, Jesus himself drew near and walked along with them; <sup>16</sup> they saw him, but somehow did not recognize him. <sup>17</sup> Jesus said to them, "What are you talking about to each other, as you walk along?"

They stood still, with sad faces. <sup>18</sup> One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only visitor in Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have been happening there these last few days?"

<sup>19</sup> "What things?" he asked.

"The things that happened to Jesus of Nazareth," they answered. "This man was a prophet and was considered by God and by all the people to be powerful in everything he said and did. <sup>20</sup> Our chief priests and rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and he was crucified. <sup>21</sup> And we had hoped that he would be the one who was going to set Israel free! Besides all that, this is now the third day since it happened. <sup>22</sup> Some of the women of our group surprised us; they went at dawn to the tomb, <sup>23</sup> but could not find his body. They came back saying they had seen a vision of angels who told them that he is

alive. <sup>24</sup> Some of our group went to the tomb and found it exactly as the women had said, but they did not see him.”

<sup>25</sup> Then Jesus said to them, “How foolish you are, how slow you are to believe everything the prophets said! <sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and then to enter his glory?” <sup>27</sup> And Jesus explained to them what was said about himself in all the Scriptures, beginning with the books of Moses and the writings of all the prophets.

<sup>28</sup> As they came near the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther; <sup>29</sup> but they held him back, saying, “Stay with us; the day is almost over and it is getting dark.” So, he went in to stay with them. <sup>30</sup> He sat down to eat with them, took the bread, and said the blessing; then he broke the bread and gave it to them. <sup>31</sup> Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight. <sup>32</sup> They said to each other, “Wasn't it like a fire burning in us when he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?”

<sup>33</sup> They got up at once and went back to Jerusalem, where they found the eleven disciples gathered together with the others <sup>34</sup> and saying, “The Lord is risen indeed! He has appeared to Simon!”

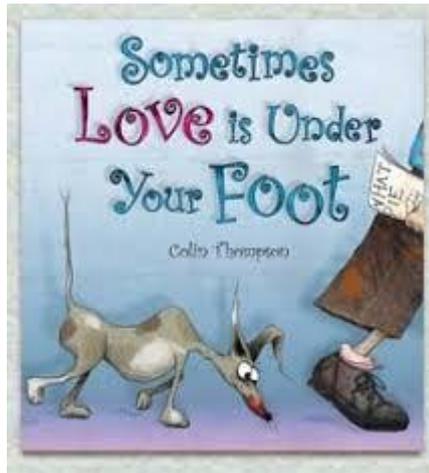
<sup>35</sup> The two then explained to them what had happened on the road, and how they had recognized the Lord when he broke the bread.

The Gospel of the Lord

***Praise to you Lord Christ***

**Hymn: Lord the light of your love (TiS 675, Shine Jesus Shine, Graham Kendrick)**

**A Story about Love that Shows Up even when Ignored:  
“Sometimes Love is Under your Foot” (Colin Thompson)**



**Some thoughts...**

**Let's Give: Our Offerings**

**Doxology**

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,  
praise him, all creatures here below,  
praise him above, ye heavenly host,  
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.***

**Prayer of Dedication**

**Prayers of the People**

The one who prays after a series of petitions says, "Raise us Lord" and the people respond, "Make us a risen people". Today, I invite you to offer prayers for a resurrected world, as we pass through dark times as COVID-19 remains either striking or hidden ready to strike. Increasing significant is the economic picture which will be with us for some time. Amid all of this, don't forget to celebrate relationships: those we love, who love us, those in our immediate communities, including our own church community at St Ives UC.

**Closing Hymn: O for a thousand tongues (TiS, 210, Lyngham Charles Wesley)**

**Blessing and Sending Out**

Christ is risen!

We see reality through resurrection

We seek to live lovingly, truthfully, inclusively

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

***In the name of Christ***

**Blessing Song (TiS 780, Blessing Song, Mandy Treagus)**

**May light come in to your eyes**

**May hope spring up in your heart**

**May peace guide all of your mind**

**And keep you in God**

**And keep you in God**

**Musical Postlude**

**Organist**



Chasing the Horizon