

EASTER 5 – Remember and Be Re-membered

St. Timothy's Episcopal Church

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Have you noticed how spring seems to sing to us in a way that no other season does? When you wake in the morning, a little pat of sunny warmth teases through crisp air, faint blossom perfume wafts in the wind, the birds sing a frantic symphony. In all of it, I have flashes of remembrance of childhood yearning to run free and gulp greedily from this fountain of new life. Spring calls us to remember the promise of new birth, the hope of new possibilities, the joy of new life. *Remember*, says the sun. *Remember*, says the wind. *Remember*, say the birds. The Easter season is a time for remembering.

It is in this time when green life sprouts from brown earth, that new life emerges from a dark tomb. The risen Christ who talks with the disciples, and walks and eats with them, is not exactly the Jesus who died on the cross. Yet, they know he *is* Jesus, the one they love. But they can't help sneaking glimpses of him from the corner of their eyes. Does he look like he's lost weight? Is his hair getting grey? Are there more wrinkles around his mouth? Something is different from the Jesus they remember.

And so they spend a lot of time remembering him. They tell stories as they bed down, like a slumber party. They recall what he said, while stirring the stew pot. But mostly they remember when they break the bread. They remember that last night when he taught them. He talked a long, long time. And you know, you just can't absorb everything a person says, no matter how important it is, when you're frightened and hungry and worn out. So now each one remembers a piece of what Jesus said, and they throw their remembrance crumbs out onto the table.

He said he was going to prepare a place for us with his Father. He said that there were plenty of dwelling places. I thought that he was going to put together the kingdom that he always talked about, where everyone would have good homes and safe cities. I remember him saying that he would come back to

get us and take us to the kingdom. I was thinking that maybe his army was just outside the gate. Maybe God's heavenly army would swoop down and kill the Romans! Maybe – but, no, that's not really what I remember.

“He told us that we know the way to the place where he was going,” says Thomas. “But when I asked him where to find it, he said, ‘I am the way, the truth and the life. If you know me you know my Father also.’ What kind of *place* is that? What happens if people don't know the way? How will they find the place? Would he leave them behind?”

“When I asked him to show us the Father,” says Philip, “he said, ‘You have already seen him.’ I don't remember seeing the Father, do you?”

Sharing their memories reminds them of how confused and frightened they were that last night when Jesus spoke these words. But then one of them takes the bread, and when they break the bread, they remember more.

I remember he said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” I remember he said, “Believe in me – trust me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.” I remember he said, “When I go to the Father, you will do greater works than any that I have done.” They remember that when Jesus broke the bread he told them that they would find him in it, whenever and wherever they were together, remembering him. “Stay together,” he said. “Love one another as I have loved you. Keep following. Keep growing the kingdom, the kingdom that is on earth as it is in heaven.”

Why is it that human beings seem more concerned with life after death than with life after birth? Why are we so worried about getting into heaven? Why is it that when we read this passage (often used in funerals) that we think that Jesus is talking only about heavenly dwelling places? Could he also mean *earthly indwelling* places?

Earth is not a waiting room for heaven. Our lives as humans are entrance exams for eternal life. The Reign of God does not begin at the pearly gates. The Reign is NOW. The kingdom is here. It's in the mist – just beyond our sight. But now and then we hear songs of its brilliance. It's covered with the filth of a greedy

world's self-indulgent pollution. But now and again its sweet breeze wafts by us. The kingdom is mired in the ruts of complacent injustice. But inch by inch, bit by bit, it is moving, yearning to run free and gulp from the fountain of new life.

Remember, Jesus tells us. Remember. Because when you remember, you are re-membered.

When we break the bread and remember his words, we dwell in him and he in us – all of us in union with the Father. Here and now we abide in the Father's steadfast love. Everyday we are given the power over sin and evil by the risen Son. We are continually soaked in the Spirit's caldron of new life, refined in its fire, honed as disciples. Here and now we are equipped by baptism, and called to reveal God's kingdom of peace, an Eden of new life for everyone on earth. We can do greater things than Jesus ever did, because we span the globe with millions of more hands and feet and voices than he had. This is how we grow in faith. This is how we come to believe.

But it won't happen if we don't follow the *Way* – the way out of our fear and life's failings by remembering Jesus. The kingdom won't come if we don't stay together, serve each other, trust each other and abide with each other, dwelling in the place of *Truth* where we see the Father. And the Kingdom won't come until we all imitate the *Life* and ministry of Jesus, bearing hope, bringing justice with reckless courage. Following Jesus is the *Way* to the Truth of Life – and the truth of life is that we are God's people, cherished by our creator who wishes only that we dwell in him and share his steadfast love all our life long, on earth as well as after death.

Remember and be re-membered. Today, when we break the bread together, hear the promise:

“Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. . . A chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation of God who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”