



Jonesboro Heights Baptist Church
Sanford, North Carolina

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Easter Sunday

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Mealtime with Our Risen Lord
Luke 24:13-35

Strange things . . .

It had been a strange week in and around Jerusalem. On Sunday, the first day of the week, the carpenter-turned-teacher/prophet/miracle-worker, Jesus of Nazareth, had entered Jerusalem on a donkey to shouts of praise—like a king coming in peace. He had cleared the moneychangers and merchants from the temple that day, then taught there all through the week, taking on the challenges of the Jewish religious leaders from all sides.

That Thursday evening, he had gathered his disciples together for the Passover meal. He loved to eat with people. Over the previous three years, he had eaten with the rich and the poor, with some of the Pharisees, and with tax collectors and sinners. And he had eaten with his disciples.

He knew what was coming, and he had an earnest desire to share this one more special meal with them before the inevitable came. As they ate, he broke the bread, gave it to them, and told them that it was his body that he was giving for them, and that they should eat it in remembrance of him. Then he took a cup of wine and said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you” (Luke 22:20).¹

Can you imagine how strange all this must have seemed to his disciples? You see, he was talking as though he were going to *die*. But *they* were expecting him to free them from Roman rule. After all, he was the Messiah, the King of the Jews!

Their hopes were dashed when a few hours later, as he prayed on the Mount of Olives, one of his own betrayed him to the Jewish authorities. They put him through a mockery of a trial, and after a persistent effort, secured the death penalty for him from the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate.

That Friday, he had died on a Roman cross—a death so cruel, humiliating, and degrading that it was reserved only for thieves, murderers, and rebels against Rome. That’s what they had accused him of—sedition against the Emperor. Through the kindness of a Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Jewish Council who was not consenting to his death, he was buried in a borrowed tomb.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.

Stranger still . . .

Strange things had happened while he was on the cross, but the strangest was yet to come! On the first day of the week, some women who had followed him had reported that they had been to the tomb early and found it empty. They said that two angels had appeared to them and told them that he was alive! But it was hard for the others to believe such a tale, especially since women weren't usually taken very seriously as witnesses to anything in that day. What was more they all knew that he had died and been buried.

But later that day, two of Jesus' followers were returning from Jerusalem to their home in Emmaus (a village about seven miles from Jerusalem). As they walked along, someone they didn't recognize came up and began walking with them—something that was not too uncommon in that day.

This stranger listened as they talked about the things that had happened, and he asked them what all this was about. They could hardly believe that he wasn't aware of what had gone on that week concerning Jesus of Nazareth. So they explained it all, detailing their disappointment at his death and their perplexity at the reports that he was alive again.

At that point, the stranger rebuked them for being slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets had spoken. Then he explained from the Old Testament Scriptures how it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and die, *then* enter his glory.

When they got home, they invited him to stay with them overnight, since it was so late. He agreed. When they had all reclined at the table to eat supper, he strangely assumed the role of host, took the bread, broke it, and gave it to them. Suddenly, they recognized him! It was *Jesus*, their risen Lord! And he had made himself known to them in the breaking of bread! And then he *vanished* from their sight . . .

They immediately hurried back to Jerusalem to tell the others what had happened. Jesus' followers in Jerusalem also knew now that he had risen, because he had appeared to Peter, too.

At the table . . .

Isn't it amazing? The disciples from Emmaus recognized the risen Jesus when he broke the bread. Up until then, they didn't recognize him, but once he broke the bread and gave it to them, their eyes were opened and they knew who he was! He was "made known to them in the breaking of bread" (24:35).² They had experienced *mealtime with our risen Lord*.

But they weren't the only ones! You see, their experience linked the mealtimes they shared with the earthly Jesus with their observances of the Lord's Supper—often called "the breaking of bread," especially in Luke's writings. The fact is that just as with the church throughout the centuries, when we share in Holy Communion, we experience mealtime with Jesus.

It's just that simple: *for genuine believers, the Lord's Supper is mealtime with our risen Lord*.

That day, something new and strange had happened. God had raised Jesus from the dead, never to die again! Jesus had conquered death! And now he joined his disappointed and perplexed disciples at mealtime, to make his victory known to them.

Today, nearly 2,000 years later, Jesus our risen Lord still joins us at his table for his meal. As we dine with him, we remember what he's done for us. We look forward to the great messianic banquet when he returns in glory and his kingdom comes in its fullness. And we experience fellowship with him, as he is truly present with those who come to this meal in faith.

² From the *New Revised Standard Version*.

The little hymn we sometimes sing as we prepare for Communion says it well:

Here at Thy table, Lord,
This sacred hour,
O, let us feel Thee near,
In loving power;
Calling our thoughts away
From self and sin,
As to Thy banquet hall, we enter in.

And so now on this Easter morning as we have gathered to share his Supper, remember that he is *risen*, and he is *here* with us. He is present among us to meet us, to commune with us, to minister to us, to call us to take up our cross daily and follow him in the anticipation of sharing in his resurrection. If we partake in faith, open to experiencing his presence, he will make himself known *to us* in the breaking of bread.

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