

# THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

April 14, 2024



## REMEMBER

*he already told us this would happen*

by Drew Downs

A recurring part of the Easter stories has Jesus remind the disciples that he told them this would happen. We might compare this to an “I told you so” but it seems far more about being instructive than lording it over them. He invites them to remember. Then he invites them to see it as an example. This (now) past event will inform their future. If they recognize how it pertains to faith. To following Jesus. And to the nature of God’s mission for the cosmos.

It would be easy enough for us to leave it there. That this was instruction for *them*. But rare is the part of the story *only* for them.

What if we take this as instructing us? That we should know that resurrections *will* happen. Because he says this will happen. That this is how God operates. God has destroyed death and shows forgiveness to the repentant. So we remember what God is like so we might be faithful in the present.

# EASTER

2024

## WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way  
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

### Eclipse

This week's total solar eclipse was fun; offering us an opportunity to experience this natural phenomenon while hosting guests to our community. People all over the country wanted to get a view.

The eclipse also gave certain fundamentalist Christians the opportunity to predict the end of the world. Of course, I know the people of St. Stephen's aren't so easily taken in by these conspiracies. But why do so many others? And do we know where this thinking come from?

In one sense, it is easy to see where these ideas come from. But it becomes even harder to understand the more we read Revelation, Torah, Prophets, and Gospels. They might quote a verse in scripture, but it is unrecognizable in scripture itself.

The vision the conspiracies offer often supports the anger they want to justify, the status they want to maintain, and a vision for God that matches their own sense of power. So an eclipse becomes the fodder for the realization of that vision. Much like a hurricane cast as punishment, an eclipse symbolizes *opportunity*. Not for a demonstration of grace, but of power. Not of love, but of wrath.

There's a reason doomsday prophecies never sound like Jesus—even when they quote him. Our work involves being more like Jesus, aligning ourselves to his vision. Less predicting the end of the world and more caring for the least of these.

With love,  
Drew

# EASTER

2024

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## FOR SUNDAY

*Third Sunday of Easter*

April 14, 2024

### **Collect**

O God, whose blessed Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread: Open the eyes of our faith, that we may behold him in all his redeeming work; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**Amen.**

### **Reading**

Luke 24:36b–48

Jesus himself stood among the disciples and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."

# EASTER

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## Reflection

In Luke's gospel, Jesus first appears to a pair of disciples as they travel the road to Emmaus. Then he appears to the whole group. So the group now has already received testimonies from Mary and a couple of other disciples. I suspect there's some healthy skepticism still buzzing about. Most likely that they're just seeing things.

I don't know if you've ever had an experience with the supernatural, but I have. And twenty-five years later, I still don't know how to explain it. The only category we have for this is to call it "seeing a ghost."

The phenomena is well known as a matter of *belief* or *skepticism*. And for many of us who have such an encounter, that debate happens internally, too. That we can explain away the sighting as our brain playing tricks on us, or that we were just "seeing things." And in reality, they remain just as unsatisfying when we *don't* believe. Because we still saw something *we don't believe we could*.

For Jesus, it remains important that the disciples focus on the mission of God; rather than the actuality or substance of the resurrection. Yes, see him. Go ahead, touch. Here, let's eat something. This isn't in your minds—you aren't imagining this.

As much as the *disciples* are focused on their fear—and we with them—Jesus and the evangelist are focused on *understanding the Scriptures*. Specifically, that they reveal Jesus and the disciples are *witnesses* to this. **And so are we.**

That we might struggle to explain it (or even believe it!) is not actually the central theme of our faith. Nor is it our primary struggle as people of faith. Our faith is built upon the truth revealed to us in the person of Jesus. A truth full of hope, worship, and love. Today and every day.

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