

SHARE !

Luke 24 redacted

1 Peter 1:17-25



Our sons had the same kindergarten teacherⁱ, who shared a classroom with another teacher. One taught in the morning and the other in the afternoon, but both were in the classroom all day supporting each other as they did all the things our school district expected kindergarten teachers to do. They taught reading and writing with the same methods sharing the same tools. They introduced basic addition skills in October because *Sesame Street's* Count von Count made Halloween a fun choice for learning the life skill that follows counting. They also taught parents how to collaborate in our children's education through volunteer opportunities and reading homework. I enjoyed talking with these fine teachers about our shared work to teach both children and their parents sharing skills and inclusion in our school district dominated by double-income professional families.

Birthday celebrations were in their curriculum for parents. Birthdays were celebrated in our school's classrooms by sharing favorite purchased cookies with the entire class, no guilt for the parents who did not have either time or skill to make elaborate cupcakes for all, easy for the teachers to include children with allergies or families with money problems with a safe cookie from their class cupboard. As a parent, I learned a life lesson about how simple sharing with all can be.

Today we share a beloved resurrection story centered on an invitation to supper. On the afternoon of Resurrection Day two people walked to Emmaus from Jerusalem. They were joined by Christ, but failed to recognize him as they talked about Mary seeing the risen Lord. Arriving in Emmaus, they invited him to share supper. As Christ broke their bread, they realized they had been talking with Christ for hours! It took sharing supper for them to recognize him. They ran back to Jerusalem to share their excitement with Peter and the others.

Ordinary people just like us believed, rejoiced, and shared because Christ joined them on Resurrection Day. The sun set on that day, just as it has every day since. But humans still encounter the risen Christ through the same pattern —Believe! Rejoice! Share!

I wonder how many times and how many ways Peter taught Christian sharing in the thirty years between Christ's resurrection day and the day Peter wrote his letter to us. If we use the math skills we learned in fourth grade to multiply a single sermon every Sunday for fifty-two weeks by 30 years, that would have been 1,560 sermons. Do you think Peter was as excited about the 1,560th sermon as he was the 1st sermon?

I hope you chose to say "yes," because here is a secret all preachers know; when we share our experiences with Christ our enthusiasm for sharing Christ's love grows. With each opportunity we accept to share Christ's message of love, we find new insights we had not noticed before.

This week I noticed two odd verses in Peter's letter to us, "Live in this way, knowing that you were not liberated by perishable things like silver or gold from the empty lifestyle you inherited from your ancestors. Instead, you were liberated by the precious blood of Christ. . . ." (1 Peter 1:18-19, Common English Bible/CEB)

Friends, have you ever considered silver or gold to be perishable? Part of their value lies in their permanence. A gold band is lifelong symbol of wedding vows made once. Heirloom silver spoons and forks can be useful as daily flatware and yet sold in hard times. We think of gold and silver as valuable, as Peter wrote, in some very real ways they are perishable.

Peter wrote to us that while gold and silver will perish, Christ's love for us will not. Christ's love for us cannot be set aside by either death or divorce like a gold wedding band. Christ's love for us cannot be sold like silver heirloom flatware. Christ's love for us is the seed of new life that once sown changes us through growth.

Sharing our faith brings our spiritual growth. Do we do share our faith like kindergarten students sharing a bag of store-bought cookies with their class, our parents buying the cookies and as a wise teacher making certain everyone is included? Or do we share our faith like parents who invites everyone to the party, doing all they can so no child is excluded? Or do we share like parents who only invite select children to select events?

Truth be told, I have shared all three ways. Is the same true for you as well? As a young child, I shared Mom bought Oreos in Sunday School. As a mother who want her children to have hospitable hearts, we began our family traditions by hosting birthday parties that included everyone. Later as we noticed one of our children child found those big parties anxiety producing, we adapted our hospitality to invite only close friends to a special celebration. We did what we could to share the love of our blessed child with others.

When it comes to sharing, is there a wrong answer? Yes, not sharing whenever you can.

Let's go back to our Resurrection Day story. Two people were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus discussing Jesus' resurrection reports as they went along. Then they were joined by a stranger. This was their first opportunity to choose whether to share or not. For any number of reasons—fear or shyness among them—they could have chosen to not share their walk and conversation with the stranger. But they chose to share their walk.

By evening, the three of them arrived in Emmaus. With no *Kwik Trip* or *McDonald's* where the stranger could go buy his own supper, the hospitality of their age required the two who lived in Emmaus to invite the stranger to share their supper. Their hospitality rules are similar to kindergarten rules about bringing cookies to share with everyone on your birthday. For their kindergarten child, a parent had a choice: you could either follow the teacher's rules, or you could send no cookies at all and have no celebration. Whenever there is a rule, we all must choose if we will keep it. The two from Emmaus could have broken their rule by not sharing their supper. But they kept their rule and shared their supper. Doing so, they met the risen Christ at their own table.

When we share simply with other people, we very well may find Christ there with us as well. This is not sharing to show off our status. This is not sharing to force our ways on someone else. This is sharing because as people of faith we do what Jesus taught us, to do for each other what we want others to do for us. Often that doing is sharing, sharing time, sharing food, sharing joys and sorrows. Sometimes, often even, we find Christ's spirit with us as we share.

But wait! There's more! While we can share as hosts the way Christ's travel companions did, we can also share by being the guest as Christ did. Because Christ chose to accept their offer to share their supper, their lives were changed with the imperishable blessing of a miracle they could share again and again.

Now when I accept another's invitation, I don't assume they will meet Christ face-to-face. Perhaps they will. Perhaps they won't. But I do know as I mimic Christ by accepting what others share with me from their hearts, I often experience Christ present even more profoundly when I pray at home alone.

Christ shared so many meals in his time on earth, both before the cross and after his resurrection. Often, he was someone else's guest—Peter's mother-in-law, Zacchaeus, Marth & Mary, Simeon, Peter in the locked room—it's a long list. But

sometimes Christ hosted—feeding thousands with fish and bread, the last supper, a farewell fish breakfast on the beach. I love the fish breakfast story; we don't preach it often, but it tells us what Christ told Peter to do as he began to lead the church. Allow me to tell it one more time for you here. (You can also read it in John 21.)

Sooner or later after Christ's resurrection, the disciples needed to go back to work. For Peter and some of the others, that work was commercial fishing. They had been out casting their nets all night and caught nothing. Just before dawn, as Jesus stood on the beach, but it was still dark enough that they could not make him out clearly. He asked them how their catch was. They replied that they had caught nothing. Then Jesus said, "Cast your net on the right side and you will find some." Casting one last time, the net was so full they were not able to haul it in!

With that catch, they realized Christ was standing on the beach! Simon Peter jumped in the water and swam to him. Jesus asked for some of their catch and made them a fresh fish breakfast.

When breakfast was done, Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Do you love me?"

Peter replied, "Yes Lord, you know I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

Their conversation goes on, two more times Jesus asked Peter if he loved him, Peter always replied "Yes", and Jesus commanding, "Feed my sheep." Peter was commissioned to share the love with which Christ had blessed him with this world Christ came to save. By feeding Christ's lambs, Peter shared the love Christ had shared with him.

Like Peter, like the two from Emmaus, we share the love Christ gave us with each other whenever we share a meal, as simply as children with birthday cookies in a kindergarten circle. But unlike those cookies, or silver and gold, the love we share will never run out, never perish. The love we share can only grow.

Grace and peace to us all. Amen.

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