

## **Sermon: Who We Eat With Matters**

Year A, Third Sunday of Easter

[Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19; 1 Peter 1:17-23; Luke 24:13-35](#)

Offered April 30, 2017 to Brookline Community Church, Brookline, NH

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What was the worst part of elementary school? No kids answer, just the adults. Let's see how good their memory is. Be honest. Not math. Not recess. Not Mrs. Christopher's gym class, although that was torture. Right. Lunch.

Did you buy or bring? Lunch box or brown bag? Chips or only healthy stuff? Weird sandwich, PB&J, or worse yet, no sandwich at all? Where to sit, or really, who to sit with? And even if you worked all that out, didn't you look around just about every time, at *that* table? Didn't you think about the day with Fritos and Oreos, ham and American on white? Or sliding your tray in on pizza day. Am I right? Yeah. Who we eat with matters. It tells us about them. And it tells us about us. How long did it take before you were really comfortable with your place in the cafeteria? For me it was senior year in high school. It took 12 of 18 years, literally 2/3rds of my life, to be at ease with my place in the cafeteria eco-system.

Again, I'm speaking to the parents. You would do anything to keep your kid from suffering for 12 years. Well, anything except feed them food that wasn't healthy for them, spend money you didn't have, or support them when they were cutting out good friends who had been loyal their whole childhood. Am I right? Yeah. Who we eat with matters. It tells us about them. And it tells us about us. As parents we know our kids need that time of struggling to figure out who to eat with because it teaches everyone a lesson we all still need as adults. Who we eat with matters.

In today's reading, Cleopas (can you imagine having that name and going out for recess?) and another disciple are heading away from Jerusalem on Easter Sunday. They've heard from the women that Jesus was alive, and they left anyway. Jesus joins them on the road to Emmaus. They don't recognize him. That's not unusual. In almost all the Resurrection stories, people don't recognize Jesus after he's risen from the dead. He walks with them and they tell him all their fears and worries. He responds by reminding them of the sacred stories that tell about the coming of the Messiah.

So why doesn't he do something that breaks through the noise in their head? This isn't good. Three days after his death and his community is already falling apart. The more they walk, the more splintered the community becomes. They're not listening to each other. They're not eating together. He's reminding them of the sacred stories from the books of Moses and the Prophets. He's using the tools he always used to teach them, and they're not getting it. By using those stories, Jesus is also using the tools they will have when he is no longer physically in the world. And they're not getting it. The whole seven miles to Emmaus shows how Jesus' message dies in this world. The message fades away and the community falls apart in fear and its own needs.

Jesus acts as if he was going to keep walking, leaving the two disciples in Emmaus. They are the ones who invite him to eat with them. At that meal is when they recognize him. When their lives turn around. When they run through a spring night, seven miles, back to Jerusalem to tell their friends that "He is Risen!" When they return to their community to begin the rest of their lives, eating together and with strangers, telling about Jesus of Nazareth, about the Son of God, who lived on this earth and ate bread and drank wine and walked seven miles with men who had been told he was alive again, but who were so lost in grief they ran away from that community.

Jesus acts as if he was going to keep walking. He wasn't going to say, "You knuckleheads, it's me! Your savior, you dingbats!" His message is there walking with us, available in every bookstore, every hotel nightstand, every Sunday. His message of loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself, his promise of life everlasting and the Kingdom of God here on this earth is ours to hear and to follow. Or to ignore, because we're so focused on our own worries and fears. It's our call whether and how much of his message we absorb, and whether or how much of his message we share with others.

Because, in the end, we are still working on that message from elementary school. Who we eat with matters. It tells us about them. It tells us about us. We're having pizza after worship today. Pizza is great, don't get me wrong. Big fan. But there is no way that we can eat together, break bread or pizza together, and not know that it matters who we eat with. Jesus taught us that. We feel the fire of Jesus' love, when we set aside the noise in our heads to really find out about the people we eat with. Because who we eat with matters. Am I right? Oh yeah.