

April 1, 2018 – Soli Deo Gloria  
By Wayne J. Schneider

Seeing What You Believe.  
St. Luke 24:13-49

To whom or what do you turn to when you need to “Chill Out?” When the stress becomes too much, and you just have to, as Elaine said on Seinfeld, “Get out!” where do you go? Out of town, out of country, or out of your head?

St. Luke tells us about two travelers who felt the need to “*Get out!*” This year’s celebration of Passover is weird. Last week they had been a part of a crowd that waved palm branches at Jesus and cried out, “*Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*”

Regrettably, things when downhill from there. Appearances before Pilate the governor and then Herod. The crowd is manipulated to demand the release of Barabbas instead of Jesus. Jesus is then beaten to within an inch of his life, suffers the humiliation and pain of a crucifixion, and before the Sabbath begins, dies; and his body is laid in someone else’s tomb. Jesus’ disciples flee, fearing for their lives, and spend the weekend locked in a room, paranoid the authorities were coming to get them.

St. Luke tells us that on Sunday morning the women, *just the women*, came to the tomb to anoint Jesus, and the weird just keeps on happening. They see the stone covering the tomb has been rolled away from the opening, and the corpse is gone. The ladies rush back, proclaiming Jesus has risen from the dead. The men disregarded the report as nothing but grief stories. Confusion reigns. Anxiety immobilizes everyone, and the situation was not what the people expected from their Messiah.

On their homeward stroll, two exhausted and saddened men were chatting about the recent events. Soon, a third person joined them and asked what they are discussing. The two were shocked that this stranger was unaware of all that had happened; but they soon bring him up to speed. The stranger returned the favor

by interpreting for them all the Old Testament prophecies that spoke of the Messiah.

When they reached their home, the two invited the stranger in for a meal and a night's stay. As they ate together, the guest raised the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Quickly they realized the stranger was Jesus, but their discovery was too late: Jesus had already dematerialized.

Now newly energized, the two run to Jerusalem and share with the rest of the disciples what happened. *"The Lord has risen indeed!"* they shout. Before they can finish Jesus rematerializes again. It's like 'emotional ping pong!' The men are petrified! But Jesus says, *"Peace be with you!"* I think Jesus had to say that or the disciples would have 'stroked out! And, only after eating a meal with them, do they cease their doubt.

Jesus enables their minds to open, so they finally understand what the Holy Scriptures say about him: *"You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."*

The two travelers leave again, but now they are filled with joy as they process all that has recently happened. Perhaps their conversation was something like this: *"I can't believe we were so blind,"* one said. *"We thought we were telling Jesus all about what had happened, and in reality, we were the ones who still didn't understand."*

*"Indeed,"* the companion replied. *"We saw Jesus' death as the end of all of our plans, not part of the fulfillment of his plan. Even after he explained everything to us, we still didn't see him for who he is." "I know; we really missed it. When we got home, I was so tired and dejected, I only extended him hospitality out of obligation, I sure wasn't up for company. Although Jesus was trying to get us to see who he was, even then he wouldn't have imposed himself on us. He always waits for an invitation."*

The companion ponders this for a minute and replies, *“We should have gotten it at dinner when Jesus, who was our guest, became the host. We were both dumbfounded when we finally realized who he was, but by then he disappears!”*

*“As I’ve thought about this, I’ve realized a few things. A week ago we were leaving this city in defeat, retreating. Jesus met us right where we were—in the middle of our escape. I’ve learned that the Lord can come to us in unfamiliar ways and often when we least expect him.”*

*“That’s true,”* the other replied, *“we can never put Jesus in a box. He’s not predictable—elusive sometimes, just at the edge of our awareness and our perception.”*

*“I agree with that, but that doesn’t mean he isn’t here when we don’t see him. I know this journey won’t be an easy one, but now I truly believe that he is alive and always with us. From now on, I’ll always see him whenever we gather around the table, at worship, at the food bank, at home, or on the road. Although he may never appear to us again, we’ll see him everywhere good works are done. I pray that we can help others believe, so that they can see him too, and say for themselves, ‘Christ is risen, Christ is risen indeed!’”* Alleluia. Amen.