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“You Wouldn’t Know A Diamond If You Held One In Your Hand” The Rev. Aaron M. G. Zimmerman (4/23/2023, Third Sunday of Easter)

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Okay, let us pray.

Almighty God made the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight. Oh Lord, our strength and our Redeemer.

Amen.

In 2014, the alt pop British duo named Oh Wonder

two married couple, they decided that every month of the year they would release a new single recorded release new single, they did that for now a long time it is now 2023. So this has been quite a work. They're put together almost 10 years, and they then put them together in the album's great success. sold out shows. Some of you remember their 2014 collab with Lil Uzi Vert,

looking at you and Armand, and,

but I am bringing them up because in 2019, they recorded a song called hallelujah, where they talk about no matter what I'm going to sing hallelujah anyways. And I feel like on this third Sunday of Easter, the clouds the rain has sort of dampen the Easter joy a little bit if this is your first Sunday, I encourage you to come back for many reasons, but with only one would be seeing the sun through those windows in that window. So even though it's gray, cloudy and rainy, in order to proclaim the resurrection of our Lord, we weren't allowed to say hallelujah during Lent. I'd like you to quote a wonder and the Bible and say hallelujah.

Well done Episcopalians. I know that felt very weird for some of you. But good job. That's actually not what I want to talk about. today. I want to talk about Steely Dan. You know, nobody listens to the first two minutes of a sermon. So you kind of sit down brain checks out, because now you can relax. Right? You don't have to look at the bulletin. Am I missing? Am I in the right place? What I don't know what's going on. I'm so anxious and confused. You sit down your brain takes a little vacay. And now we're back. Okay, we're back here. And

in 1972, Steely Dan recorded a song called reeling in the years, I'm reeling in the years, I'm stone away the time. And I bring that up because in the first verse of that song, the singer says, You wouldn't even know a diamond, if you held one in your hand, the things you think are precious, I will never understand.

But I bring it up for that line, not recognizing a diamond that you hold in your hand. And I think this is something that we have experienced many times in our own lives where there's something really precious and amazing going on around us and we don't recognize it. And you know where I'm going with this. God is often something in our life that we don't recognize. Now we recognize God in the big wonderful, exciting things. We recognize God when there's a beautiful sunset over Lake waco or the Grand Tetons or wherever you may be recognize God in, when you hold an infant, and you say, this is a miracle. We don't recognize the diamond we hold in our hand, when you're speeding towards Houston making good time on highway 60, clear through college station, then you hit 290.

And suddenly, all those drivers have appeared out of nowhere. And you don't recognize the diamond in your hand, you don't say, Lord, thank you, for this moment you've given me to gather my thoughts, and to pray for all these drivers around me where they may be going into practice that patience, which I've asked you many times to give me. That's not what you say, in traffic.

We don't recognize the diamond we hold. In our hand, this happens to many people. Often it happens not just with situations that come to us from the outside, but situations that we have brought on ourselves, we often make a significant change in our life thinking that we'll fix something that is broken, if I can move from this job to another job, then I will finally be happy if I can move from this relationship, which everybody told me was a bad idea to this next one, then I will be happy if I can move out of Central Texas and get to another place then I will be happy or people that have left other places to move to Central Texas, then they will be happy. The thing is about all those changes, as they say, wherever you go, there you are. new job, new relationship, new geographic location, you're still there and you've brought all your baggage with you. And there are times like that when things get very difficult where we tend to not see the diamond we hold in our hand the presence of God working in our life. I want to talk about that. And I want to talk about that in light of Luke's Gospel chapter 24. We just read from this passage, and it is ground zero. For a story in scripture where people do not recognize the presence of Christ is B

beautiful story written by Luke, the evangelist. And he's talking about these two disciples who are walking along the road to a village called a mess outside Jerusalem. And it says that Jesus appears to them just walking along the side of the road with them. And they don't

recognize him. In other ancient sources, not in the hearse source, you heard read, but it says that Jesus was wearing a hoodie. And he had the hood up. And he pulled the drawstrings very tight. And so they didn't recognize who he was. Thank you to those who humored me by laughing. The rest of you, I don't know if you don't know what a hoodie is, but you can Google it. And you can try to talk to someone as they wear their hood, teens do this a lot. It's a way of shutting out the world. I don't know if you know any of them. But anyways,

Jesus is there with him, and they don't recognize him. And this is significant. They don't recognize the diamond they hold in their hand. And one can't really blame them, because they've just been through a lot.

They have been following Jesus for some time, we know that they were part of the inner circle of Jesus's disciples, we don't know, we know that they were not the 12 apostles. But we do know they were inner circle, because it says, we were in the room when Mary Magdalene came and told us that they went to the tomb, and they didn't see the body of the Lord and the tomb was open, they saw angels. So we know that these are inner circle, kind of folks. And so they've been following Jesus. They've gone through now the experience of witnessing his death, the end of everything that they had put their hopes in, we thought he was the one that would redeem Israel, and they tell Jesus,

and now that these rumors that he is alive.

But note, even with the rumors that he is live, they are not sticking around to find out. And I just want to underline two interesting things about these disciples, we don't know their names, you know, one is clear. Plus, Luke tells us that the other one misses out on his chance to be recorded in the Bible. Maybe Luke had beef with him I don't know is like clear person, what's his name? We're walking to Emmaus. But we find out two things. We think disciples are usually like really holy people. We we hear the term disciple, oh, she's a real disciple. He's a real disciple. Oh, they must be they must have memorized their Bible in our church all the time, and only listened to Caleb. And that's what we might think about these two guys as they're walking to Emmaus, because they're disciples. But note with me,

the Inner Inner Circle, the real circle of just the 12. And the real close disciples, they're staying in Jerusalem. Now they're scared, they're in a locked room, at least they're staying there waiting around, these guys are not waiting around to find out, they've hit the road, it's getting a little hot in Jerusalem, the police are definitely still looking for the people that were associated with this known criminal Jesus of Nazareth, who was just crucified for being this revolutionary. And so they are not going to stick around. They don't want to be associated with him. They're on their way out of town. They and they also are part of the group of disciples who in

this same chapter, a few verses earlier, Luke said, they didn't believe the stories of Jesus's resurrection. Mary Magdalene in the women had gone to the tomb, they were going to try to anoint the body, they find the tombs empty, they talk to the angels, they come back to tell the disciples, we've seen these angels and they say Jesus is alive. And the text tells us that these words of the women seemed to these men, an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

They were a little bit like Elvis Presley slash Dwight Yoakam.

They had suspicious minds. They didn't trust what these people were saying they did not believe. And notice. So these are the two things these disciples, the so called holy people, they're getting out of town, they don't want to catch any heat. And they don't believe that Jesus has risen from the dead. And note number three of sort of the sins of these guys, they leave all that out.

When they tell this stranger, I don't know if you've ever met somebody at a cocktail party or waiting for the bus or your Uber driver, you're probably not going to when he says how you're doing, you're not going to say well go with a rough time I've really made some bad investments. My spouse is just mad at me because of some ongoing, really annoying personal idiosyncrasies that I can't seem to quit. I haven't talked to my oldest child and I don't really get along with anybody. That's not how you lead. When you're talking to a stranger. You don't open with what you failed with. You don't tell somebody about those years between when they say where do you go to school? You just say well, I graduated from Baylor and oh four, you don't say I started at college, the Ozarks failed or they're failed at a Texas state that's been five years on a fishing

But in Alaska, there's many mug shots of me up there, don't check. And then I came back and finished at Baylor, you don't say that you leave that out. Bishop TD Jakes up there in the Metroplex will say that everybody has their testimony. And then their X rated testimony. It was like the stuff you don't tell these guys leave a whole bunch out there like we were the ones that thought he would redeem Israel, they don't say that we laughed and fled when he was arrested. We're now getting the H E double toothpicks out of Jerusalem. And we didn't really believe the stories of the resurrection. Either. They leave all that out.

There backsliders. They're on the run. And they're not telling them they're on the run.

And this is where I think it's so important that Jesus shows up for them. Many times we think we have to have our life in order for Jesus to show up. And that is not the case. Many times we think we have to have a good report card with the Lord in order for him to grant us a favor. That is clearly not the case. And then he does this beautiful,

wonderful thing for them. He leads a Bible study. In verse 27, it says, Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus interpreted to them the things about himself and all the scriptures.

Not to sound maybe like it's a word of grace or hope. But if you know, the scriptures, you know it is because there's no New Testament at this point. The Bible is 66 books, Old Testament, New Testament, New Testament is all the stuff about Jesus. That hasn't been written yet.

All we have is the Old Testament. And Jesus here is telling them about Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, talking about the prophets and all the scriptures, the writings, and he's saying it's all about me.

And we know that this lands for them, some people, maybe you would think, Oh, Old Testament Bible study. No, thank you. I've tried that read a Bible in a year app. I got bogged down in Leviticus and never made it another page. And so you think this doesn't sound that interesting, but we know that for them, it meant something because they say our hearts burned within us when he opened the Scriptures to us.

What could have landed for these people on the run, who were kind of hiding the parts of their testimony, they don't want this stranger to know.

Well, it could have been about Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis and how God shows mercy to them after that first sin where they're hiding covered in shame. Trying to make some garments at a fig leaves and God provides a real covering invites them out and promises there will be one to come who will restore all things. Or maybe he could have told them about Abram who was not at a Bible study at St. Swithin's Episcopal Church, when God called him he was worshipping the moon in or of the Chaldeans. And God called him and said, You're gonna be the one through whom I'm gonna bless the whole world. And even when he and Sarah laugh at God, even when Abram throws Sarah under the bus twice, even when Sarah doubts what God will do in her life, all those things happen, and God sticks with them. Maybe Jesus told him that story for these backsliders. Or maybe he told him about Abraham's grandson, Jacob, who lies to his brother steals the inheritance, and how God even sticks with them. And after they've had that huge rift, they're able to reconcile, or maybe he told them about how these sons of Jacob had a terrible sibling rivalry. And they sell their younger brother to the Egyptians into slavery.

And then they go back and lie to their dad, and so, so sad, he got killed by a wild beast, and they keep that lie going in the family history. I don't know if you have any lies that are ongoing in your family history. If you want to feel better about yourself, read those advice columns, you'll see that you are not alone, in what the 23andme

has revealed about your family, or whatever the case may be.

Maybe Jesus told them those stories about that sibling rivalry, and that those lies and that dysfunctional family how God even still stuck with them. Or maybe he talked to them about how the people of Israel were oppressed in Egypt and God rescued them.

And maybe he talked to them about how they were being rescued. They were going to the Promised Land. Yes, they were moving to Twin Rivers.

That didn't work at any of the services. I keep drying. Maybe if I'd said badger Ranch, I don't know. They're moving to a place with golf courses and irrigation and beautiful homes and pickleball courts. And there they are on their way, milk and honey ahead of them. They get a little confused and ended up being 40 years in the desert, but God is with them every day feeding them maybe he told them about that story that even when people doubted and complained and worried that God still showed up. Or maybe he talked to them about the messengers, the prophets who once they'd gotten to Twin Rivers and they were living the dream they still weren't quite good at following the rules of the HOA and so God had given them

These prophets, these messengers to bring them back to right relationship with God and with each other. And not just one chance to try again, not just to not just three, but chance after chance after chance to come back

to God's goodness, did they come back, they made efforts, but it never really stuck. And so they were exiled. And these people ended up in Babylon worshipping. alongside people that were worshipping the wrong god trying to worship Yahweh in this foreign place, and foreign language and foreign customs. They had their names stolen from them, all that they love was stolen from them. But God even in exile, bless them, and help them and guided them, and made them fruitful, and brought them back home.

And of course, when they are back home, in the land of Israel, but oppressed again, God comes to them in Christ. And this Christ, who was crushed and killed now is meeting these people on the road. And he tells them all these stories about the way not not of people being holy and impressing God or their actions, but the stories of the scriptures, and how it's one consistent story of human beings being human beings. And God being God, the One who forgives and loves and sticks with people, even when they go all kinds of ways off the right track.

And so these disciples, they're finding that God does that for them, as they are fleeing, as they are disbelieving. As they are not sticking to the straight and narrow. Jesus Christ Himself appears to them on the road,

and gives them graciously and understanding that God has always been the same. God has always been the one from the beginning, until now, who sees people who are wandering sees people are lost, and brings them home and rescues them and embraces them. And it's not here to judge or condemn, but to heal, and to forgive, and to save.

And how do they find out that it's him?

They find out when they stay for a meal, and Jesus takes the bread, and He blesses it. And then he breaks it. And as the bread is broken, they realize who it is.

We do this for you every Sunday in the service. And we do it because of what happens here in this 24th chapter of Luke's Gospel. If you were to turn in your prayer book to page 364, don't do it. But just trust me.

If you return, you would see that that's the place where the celebrant is told to take the consecrated bread and to break it. And then you'll see an italic this little rubric, this little instruction, that a moment of silence is kept.

And the reason after the fraction, the fracturing of the bread. The reason that's in there, and the reason Laura or Eugene will take a beat before the music starts, is because you are invited to recognize Christ in the breaking of the bread. You may not have seen this diamond you hold in your hand through the rest of your life or through today, even as you're driving over here, whatever is going on, you may not have realized the presence of Christ. But we want you to realize it here as we hold up this spread. And as we break it, to know the miracle is not just that God came to earth for you.

Not just the Son of God has incarnated to teach us things about how we should love God and love our neighbor. But when the incarnate Son of God shows up, we know him because he is broken for us, that God knows our need, knows our own brokenness, and meets us in that. And that, to me is unbelievable. That that's how God is that God is willing to be broken, that God is willing to get as low as possible down where we are in the ditch and it'd be broken for us that we would be healed and restored.

And so when we come to the table, you'll see us hold up the bread hole.

And then the next time you see it, it will be held up broken. This is who God is for you. He is revealed to you in the breaking of the bread.

And I hope wherever you are, whatever way you like these disciples

have kept parts of your testimony hidden or you have not stayed faithful to promises you made or you found yourself continually on the run from God

that you hold this time in your hand Christ is present with you and he's made known to you in the breaking of the bread

Amen.

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