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| A Sermon by the Rev. Jeffrey A. Packard | Prepared for the congregation of Christ Episcopal Church, Spotsylvania, VA |
| To be delivered on March 27, 2016 | On the occasion of Easter Day |

Luke 24:1-12

More

We were created for greater things. It is not for this life only that we hope. It is not for this present darkness. It is not for this veil of tears. It is for a greater life that we were created, an abundant life, a glorious life, an eternal life. Jesus taught us that there is more. There is so much more than the selfish struggle of day to day survival. There is more than what we can see, and hear, and feel, and taste. There is more to life than just living. So much more that we can hardly imagine it. Our minds are too small to comprehend. Our experiences too limited.

What we see is that there is not enough. Not enough land. Not enough food. Not enough money. Not enough jobs. Not enough freedom. Not enough of whatever it is we are worried about this week. Jesus taught us that with just five loaves and two fish you can feed a multitude. With just twelve faithful people you can change the world.

What we see is disease, suffering, and death. Jesus taught us that in him there is healing, comfort, peace, and new life. What we see is someone who to us is a threat. Jesus taught us that the person we see is someone he was willing to die for, someone who bears the precious image of God, someone we are called to love.

The angels said to the women, “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” What the women saw was Jesus die on the cross and be buried in the tomb. But the tomb was empty. Jesus was not among the dead. He was alive. There was more than they could see.

This world could not contain Jesus, any more than death or that tomb could hold him. Even though this world was inadequate to contain or comprehend the infinity of God’s love that lived in Jesus, and even though our minds are too limited to wrap around it, Jesus tried to use this

world to make us understand the incomprehensible, to see the invisible. He taught about the kingdom of God using images from nature and agriculture—a mustard seed, a pearl of great worth, a little leaven or little salt. He tried to make us understand the nature of love and forgiveness with stories about a Good Samaritan and a Prodigal Son, and by washing the feet of his disciples, and by dying on the cross for our sins.

He gave us an image for the ultimate Communion with God and with one another, and at the same time established a practice of remembrance of him that we are to keep until we meet him face to face. His image of forgiveness, reconciliation, and Communion is that of sharing a meal, something families who love each other do all the time. He told us that the bread which is broken is his body given for us on the cross, and that the cup of wine that we bless is his blood which was poured out for us. These elements, bread and wine, so ordinary, so common, are for us the visible manifestation of Jesus himself, his own real, spiritual presence with us. We see, smell, touch, and taste the bread and the wine, but we know that there is more. Faith acknowledges what the senses fail to perceive.

Jesus said, “The kingdom of God has come near.” In his very person the kingdom of God is manifest. In the faithful act of taking part in Communion, we choose to live in that kingdom, even as we are still part of this world. Jesus has come into this world, and with him the kingdom of God has broken in. The bread and wine of Communion are simply the vanguard of this holy invasion, his body and blood the beachhead of a loving offensive.

We don’t really know what life is like in God’s kingdom. We can’t know until we enter it fully. But Jesus teaches us, through his crucifixion and resurrection, what it means to be a citizen of that kingdom. He teaches us what it means to live and to love. He teaches us what true Communion is. So we keep the Communion that he gave us; we live with thanksgiving and

hope; we long to experience the *more* that is only hinted at in Jesus' stories, his acts of love, and his empty tomb. We were created for more than this. We were created for glory. The resurrection of Jesus is but a first fruits of that glory promised to us, just as this Communion which we keep here today with a simple meal of bread and wine is but a foretaste of the heavenly banquet we so eagerly anticipate and the full Communion with God and one another that awaits us. So we celebrate what is already, and we look forward to that which is visible to us now only through the eyes of faith when we acclaim:

Alleluia. Christ is risen!

The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Amen.