As I mentioned last week on Palm Sunday, Holy Week is a week filled with mixed emotion not only for those who experienced it first-hand more than 2,000 years ago, but even for us today, as we go through this emotional roller-coaster ride of reading the account of events that took place. From the triumphant entry and jubilation of Palm Sunday, to the anger expressed at the temple, to the outpouring of love sharing the final Passover meal with those whom he loved, to the betrayal, fear and anxiety, to the interrogation and bloodshed, which ultimately led to the death on the cross and burial at the grave, to the missing person report with massive chaos and confusion. These series of events surely take a toll upon our human spirit not only **psychologically** and **emotionally**, but **physically** as well.

Earlier this week on Tuesday evening, I received an email from a friend sharing with us some bad news...that our mutual friend and ministry colleague – the Rev. Buddy Monahan was involved in a car accident and tragically killed out in Odessa, Texas. At first, I couldn’t believe what I was reading. I thought to myself, *“Is this some kind of an early April Fool’s Joke?”* I just saw him posting something earlier that morning on *Facebook*. This cannot be real. You’ve got to be kidding me. I was speechless and not knowing what to think or what to say, as flood of grievances and condolences began pouring in from all over the country, from various circles of ministry colleagues within the Presbyterian Church.

I have known Buddy for more than 6 years, serving alongside each other on the same committee together. He is currently the pastor of *Westminster Presbyterian Church* and was heavily involved with advocacy work and leadership development among the racial ethnic youths and young adults, especially in his Native American community.

Instead of busy preparing for Holy Week, that community of Odessa and *Westminster Presbyterian Church* are now grieving for the loss of their beloved pastor, their inspirational spiritual and community leader, and their friend. Previously Buddy had also served as the chaplain at a Presbyterian related middle-school and high school out in Albuquerque, NM. He invested tirelessly of his time as many kids’ teacher, and coaches in football and basketball. He was a mentor and inspirator among many youth and young adults both on and off the field.

No doubt, this Holy Week casts a deep shadow upon this sudden and tragic death in this small-town community, where everybody knows everybody. This Easter will not be easy as this community grieves in sorrow and sadness. How can we focus our mind on the joy of Christ’s resurrection and hope when the community is in mourning? The wound is still fresh and it will take a long time for it to be healed. Our hearts have been crushed and devastated.

Incidentally this was exactly what the early community of faith had to go through when their beloved spiritual leader was suddenly taken away from them. Jesus was unjustly arrested for blasphemy and sentenced to death for a crime that he did not even commit. He was publicly mocked, nailed, hung, and took his final breath upon the cross and was buried in the tomb. There was little that anyone could’ve stopped this from happening. Everything came so quickly they didn’t even have time to react. The community was not prepared for all of this. How could they?

In the passage that we read earlier, we came across a couple of Jesus’ disciples who were also deeply saddened by the tragic loss of their beloved spiritual leader. They too were in a state of emotional shock after witnessing what had taken place. They were sacred and confused of what might come next. And to make the matters worse, now that they heard that someone had stolen Jesus’s body out of the tomb. What in the world is going on here? Everything, all of a sudden, becoming chaotic and turning upside down and inside out! This must be some kind of a prank or an April Fool’s joke?

As the two disciples were walking on the road to Emmaus, the risen Christ suddenly appeared by their side, so they began having conversations but they failed to recognize who he was. As Cleopas and another disciple were talking with Jesus, they found it surprising that this travelling companion seemed oblivious of what has taken place in the past few days, so they started to witness to him who Jesus was, what he had done, and how their lives had been changed because of him. Jesus then responded to them saying, ***“how foolish are you and how slow of hearts in believing what the prophets have declared all along?”*** Why don’t you get all of this? Didn’t you know that all of this were meant to happen?

Jesus’s response even made these two disciples more confused, but still they had no clues as to who he was. As the day is getting late, they decided to invite him along to stay with them. So they chatted more and they shared a meal together after the long road trip. But not until Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them…THEN they recognized him. All of a sudden, everything became clear to these disciples. Their eyes were opened and they finally recognized who Jesus was, then Jesus vanished from their sight.

By now these two disciples were probably even more scared by this reappearance of Jesus. How were they going to explain all of this to others? Will other people believe them? On one hand, they were ecstatic but on the other hand, they were even more confused. People must thought that this was some kind of a prank or an April Fool’s joke? So they hurried back to Jerusalem and began telling the other disciples about what they had just witnessed. Suddenly, Jesus appeared amongst them and offered them a greeting **“*Peace be with you!*”**

Obviously, these disciples were frightened beyond their belief. They must have thought that they had seen a ghost. How could this be? How could a dead man be coming back alive and be walking around amongst us right now? We saw him dead, nailed on the cross, and we buried him in the tomb. Then Jesus summoned them to come a little closer. He offered them to come touch and see for themselves of his nail scarred hands and feet.

Then Jesus did something that was quite extraordinary. He wanted to prove to them that he was not a ghost, that indeed, he was physically alive in person. He asked for something to eat. So the disciples gave him a piece of broiled fish and he ate it right before their eyes. Holy Cow, he is real!!!

But that was not what Jesus came to do. He didn’t come just to do a little “show and tell” with the disciples to prove that he was indeed alive. He came to commission theses disciples with a new challenge…”***Don’t Be Fooled*** *by what you see,* ***Be My Witnesses***” of all these things that have happened. My part is done, and it’s now YOUR turn! Soon YOU will be **empowered** by the Holy Spirit to do extraordinary things beyond human measures and be sent out as God’s witnesses to testify for what He had done.

**Believe in yourself and have no doubt in your heart.** Live by faith and not simply by sight or touch. These were the words of the resurrected Christ for his disciples then and to us today. **Be my disciples!** **Go, show, and tell the good news of the gospel, especially in times of desperation or in places of hopelessness.**

Come to think of it, don’t we all live in a world and in a time when we don’t really know what to believe in anymore? We question whatever we see or hear on the news, regardless of who said it or how it’s said….in person or on social media. We hear conflicting stories or news each day and we demand evidences and proof. We need to do a little fact-check in order for us to believe.

While all of these are happening, our faith and integrity to the truth are being compromised. We fail to leave space for God’s miracle to take place in our lives day in and day out. However, when God steps in and intervenes, we ought to take a back-seat and listen to what God has commanded us to do, through our discernment and prayers.

**We are Easter people living in a Good Friday world. Don’t be fooled** by what we see before our eyes, **be God’s witnesses** to all things that happened along our journey of life. As God performs extraordinary miracle in us each day, sometimes we just fail to see it through our own eyes, just like those disciples who was walking alongside with them for all this time. As Jesus said to his disciples, ***“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.”[[1]](#footnote-1)***This is God’s promise and a reminder for us all today, as we declare God’s reign and power this morning both on earth, as it is in heaven….that neither life or death can separate us from God’s ultimate love for us.

Friends, the road to Emmaus is a long and treacherous one, in fact, it takes a life time to journey through. No one should be travelling alone. Christ is travelling alongside with us. Just as Cleopas had another friend travelling alongside, we need fellow sojourners also who would encourage and support one another, wash one another's feet, cry upon one another’s shoulder, and break bread together.

We are in this journey of faith together for the long-haul. It is a marathon. Don’t be fooled, like many of the disciples did on the day of resurrection, in racing to the empty tomb in search for the body, only to be disappointed. We will NOT find any body there at the tomb. The risen Christ will not there, because He is walking alongside with us, sitting amongst us right now! Have faith that Christ is alive in us, all around us, and through us.

Christ has called each of us here today to venture into this new frontier of hope and expectation. We, as Easter people, shall live out our faith as God’s living proof and witnesses in this “Good Friday” world. He has raised us, so we no longer live in the shadow of our death. Thanks be to God. Christ is Risen! Christ is Risen indeed! Hallelujah, Amen.

1. *John 14:1-3* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)