

**Devotions for the Week of April 8, 2018**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday After Easter**  
**North East United Methodist Church**  
**By Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian**

**Sunday, April 8, 2018**

**Read Luke 24:13-35.**

Jesus has been arrested, crucified...He has died on a cross and been laid in a tomb. The disciples, His friends, are despondent. Their faces downcast. They have heard the “*idle tale*” of the women who visited the tomb and found it empty. They have witnessed the dramatic events of the last week. The road to Emmaus from Jerusalem is seven miles, a long enough walk to relive days past.

Someone falls into step with the disciples and asks them what they are discussing. The disciples tell the story about, their experience with Jesus of Nazareth. They do not know that this is the risen Christ who walks beside them. At one point the disciples say, “...*but we had hoped that He was the one who was going to redeem Israel.*”

“...*but we had hoped...*” Jesus did not fulfill the picture they had as King...Savior...Messiah... Redeemer... Instead of conqueror on a white horse riding in defeating the Roman oppressor, Jesus had been arrested, beaten, did not put up a fight, and bore the nails of a criminal. At this moment, along the road to Emmaus, the disciples cannot imagine, do not believe, that Jesus could be the Messiah. “...*but we had hoped...*”

Because God did not work in the way the two disciples figured He would...Jesus certainly could not have been the Messiah. Because Jesus did not conquer their oppressor as the two disciples had imagined...Jesus certainly could not be the

Messiah. Aren't there times we fall into the same trap, our thoughts similar to the disciples? Because our lives are being led down a different path that we had planned...because our churches suddenly are looking different and worshipping differently than we had pictured...we cannot bring ourselves to believe it is God moving in our midst.

A few years ago, I invited Rev. Herb Cain to speak at our Easter Sunrise Service; he spoke on John 20:1-18. It is Easter morning and Mary Magdalene visits the tomb and finds it empty. As she stands there weeping outside the tomb, wondering where they have taken Jesus' body, she turns and Jesus is standing there. Except she doesn't know it is Jesus. She thinks it is the gardener.

Rev. Cain spoke of how perhaps she did not recognize Jesus because she wanted her "*old*" Jesus back. This was not the same Jesus who had walked with her and the disciples for three years. On earth Jesus walked with the disciples but now He has a new purpose. Jesus will ascend to His Father, and though no longer physically present, will send His Holy Spirit so that the whole world, not just the geographical area Jesus could travel to, could be touched by God.

Jesus does not come into our lives to take us "*back*" to where we once were, but to move us forward into "*new*" life...into "*new*" territory. Rev. Cain stated, "*New life doesn't mean 'resurrect our old life,' but instead it means getting something new, something different.*" Many times, people are not open to what God is doing in the church or in their own lives. We have our "*preferences*" of how things should be. In order to let go of our personal preferences it involves an "*active surrendering,*" the kind Jesus spoke about. Jesus said, "*Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and*

*take up their cross and follow me*” (Matthew 16:24).

God said through the prophet Isaiah, “*For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it?*” (43:19). How often do we, like the disciples and Mary Magdalene, miss seeing Jesus, even when He is right in front of us? How often do we miss seeing God working around us because “*we had hoped,*” because what God was doing did not look like the picture we had in our minds or the way it used to be, or because we personally did not like what was happening?

We must remember “*It’s Not About Us*” ...”*It is All About God.*” Pray that God will help you to step out of the way, to push your preconceived notions of Him and your preferences of how things should be aside, allowing Him to work, to do a “*NEW THING*” in your life and the life of North East United Methodist Church.

Fortunately, on the Road to Emmaus, Jesus revealed Himself to the disciples in the breaking of the bread. They didn’t miss Him. They ran all the way back to Jerusalem to share the news. Pray that you and I don’t miss the fact that it is Jesus who is walking beside us, speaking to us, doing a “*NEW THING*” in our lives.

## **Monday, April 9, 2018**

### **Read Acts 1:9-12.**

It has been 40 Days since the resurrection. Jesus has appeared to Mary at the tomb...He has walked with two of the disciples on the road to Emmaus...He has sat by a campfire and ate with the disciples...He has commissioned Peter to feed His sheep...He has allowed Thomas who doubted to touch His wounds...He has preached to hundreds of witnesses...and Jesus

has told His disciples to go to Jerusalem and wait...wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit...

Jesus knew they would ask the question, *“Now What?”* This is why He is sure to give them specific instruction as to what to do next, *“Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”* After giving them instruction, Jesus *“was taken up before their very eyes and a cloud hid him from their sight.”* Isn't this similar to our own experience? We come to church each week, especially Easter Sunday with all its excitement, passion, and celebration and we see Jesus. Then as the week begins for many of us, Jesus is taken up before our eyes and clouds in the shape of today's problems and issues and frustrations hide Him from our sight. Now What?

God has given us our instructions as well. God has answered the question in His Word. *“Suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky?’”*

*“Why do you stand here looking into the sky?”* Now What? It's time to stop looking up and get to work.

God gives us these wonderful moments with His Son, Jesus...moments like Easter Sunday...moments when we give our hearts to Christ...when we recommit our lives and feel ready to take on the world...moments when we experience our past forgiven, our present empowered, and our future assured...moments when we feel close to others, when we feel loved...moments when we simply want to stay right there, curled up in His lap...moments when all is good with the world. It is in those moments that God sends His angels to shout, *“Why do you stand here looking into the sky?”* Get to work.

Now What? Christ shouts to us...*"It's time to get to work."* Pray about what "*work*" God is calling you to in His church, in your community, in your life.

## **Tuesday, April 10, 2018**

### **Read Colossians 4:2; Joshua 1:8.**

Christ shouts to us...*"It's time to get to work."*

This work does not only deal with others and the Church, but it has a lot to do with ourselves. Jesus says, *"It's time to clean house."*

C.S. Lewes, in his book, Mere Christianity, writes, *"Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on: you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of – throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage; but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself."*

First, the bedroom. The bedroom is a sanctuary, a place of rest, a place of intimacy. It is here we find **Prayer**. And secondly, the study. The study is a place of going deeper, learning, knowledge, and greater understanding. It is here we find **Study and Discipleship**.

Pray that God will help you build up your prayer life and to give you a burning desire to study His Word. Take time with God tonight.

### **Wednesday, April 11, 2018**

**Read 2 Corinthians 5:19; Luke 12:35.**

God continues to rebuild the house. God continues to rebuild us. He calls us to “*get to work*” and allow Him to “*get to work*” in us.

Next is the kitchen. The kitchen is a place of fellowship. Have you ever noticed when you have a get-together, a dinner party, everyone ends up in the kitchen? It is here we find **Relationships**. Then comes the living room. This is the room where we live our lives, play games with our kids, watch movies with our spouse, put together bicycles the night before Christmas, read the next great novel, or talk to a loved one on the phone. It is here we find **Service**.

Pray that God will show you the relationships in your life He wants you to work on, reach out to, forgive, call, and love. Pray that God will lay on your heart and allow you to see clearly how He wants you to serve in your church, your community, and your world.

### **Thursday, April 12, 2018**

**Read Psalm 139:23.**

God continues to rebuild the house. God continues to rebuild us. He calls us to “*get to work*” and allow Him to “*get to work*” in us.

Next is the garage. This is the place we throw our junk, we pile things up we haven’t used in years. It is here we must explore, search deeply, and allow God to help us clean up. This is the place of **Self-Examination and Cleansing**.

Ask God to show you areas in your life that you may not want to deal with, may have pushed into the deep recesses and

corners of your garage. Ask God to help you deal with this past baggage, current hurts, and future fears. Spend time talking with God tonight about those things this devotion may have brought to mind.

### **Friday, April 13, 2018**

**Read I Corinthians 3:11; Matthew 7: 24-25.**

God continues to rebuild the house. God continues to rebuild us. He calls us to “*get to work*” and allow Him to “*get to work*” in us.

Lastly, the foundation, which everything else rests upon. We must **Put on Christ**, we must allow Christ to find a home and move in, to be our core. God must be the One we seek when we have to make decisions, look to when we are unsure, ask when we need direction, follow when the world is asking us to go in a direction we are not sure we should. God is the One we must put at the center of our lives. The One whom we must allow to not only “*clean house*” but to LEAD us.

Pray that God would truly be the One whom you lean on for all things. Ask God to come into your life in a mighty way, to be at the center of your thoughts and decisions. Tell Him how much you need Him. Open your heart and ask Him to not only be your Savior but your Leader.

### **Saturday, April 14, 2018**

Be in prayer about all you have heard and read this week. Relate these truths, not only to your own life, but to the life of the church. God wants to do a “*New Thing*” not only in your life but in the life of North East UMC. God wants to “*clean house*” and be the foundation of all we do.

Pray for our church, for our congregation. Pray that we as a congregation will allow God to come in and do His work,

guiding us and directing us into a future that does not necessarily look the way we would prefer or imagine, will not look like the past, but will be the “*new*” future that He has prepared for us.

Ask God to lay the name of someone on your heart you can reach out to today. **And remember to invite someone to church tomorrow** so they might hear of God’s grace and love for them.



(See John 20:1-18)

03-29-2002

I WANT YOU TO FOLD UP MY BURIAL CLOTHES,  
WAIT FOR MARY, AND REMEMBER THAT THIS IS  
SERIOUS ... NO HIDING AND YELLING "BOO"