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## Reflection for April 24



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*In the story of the walk to Emmaus in Luke 24:13-35, two followers of Jesus had left Jerusalem on the same day that the women had gone to the tomb and found it empty. Jesus joined them on the walk but they didn't recognize him. At the end of the day, they stopped in a village to stay the night and invited the unknown traveler to stay with them. "When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight."(vs 31)*

When I walk, I often start with an intention of noticing, of waiting and watching for something to capture my spiritual attention, so I can hear a message from God in it – prayer walking. One spring day, when I was feeling overwhelmed because I had been trying to promote an idea for a new ministry that others were resisting, I decided to take a fast and frustrated prayer walk. As I was walking, everything around me was glowing with glorious life. I

was surrounded by the delights of vivid colors, vibrant bird songs and teasing breezes. The air was filled with the luscious scents of new growth. Yet, nothing seemed to capture my spiritual attention. I was still too frustrated. God seemed to be silent, even in the midst of all the beauty. I finally plopped down on a log near the lake to relax and pray. As I sat there, a scraggly brown weed, still standing from the winter, caught my attention. I rejected it. I wanted God to capture me through something green and growing, not that old broken weed! The weed persisted in calling my attention as the withered leaves rattled in the breeze. Then I noticed that the seed pod on the weed hadn't yet opened up to drop its seeds. Poor old, wilted weed. It hadn't even opened up enough to reproduce!

My habit in my prayer walks is to ask whatever captures my attention what it has to teach me about life. "Well," I thought, "what do you have to teach me you pathetic old weed? God, what are you trying teach me through this weed?" Sitting there, still feeling a bit sorry for myself, a message floated to me on the breeze. "My seeds are ripe. The time just hasn't yet come to release them. When the time is right, they will grow. Don't force growth. Let go of your idea of the right time and allow God's time to work." My frustration melted away. I could stop pushing and trying so hard. I could let go and follow God's timing. Suddenly I could see and feel God's presence in everything. Where I only vaguely saw the beauty before, it now permeated my spirit. Where I had only experienced the silence of God, now the world sang and spoke of the fulness God's presence. My eyes and heart were opened.

How often we walk through life, troubled by all that has been happening, trying to make it through another day, struggling to figure out what's going on, hearing nothing but the silence of God. In these days of social distancing and way too many zoom meetings and being forced to learn how to be the church even when we cannot be together physically, it is easy to become overwhelmed and frustrated and depressed and lonely and, well, isolated. Where is God in this? Everything around us feels like that seemingly worthless weed. And yet. God is present. Even when we can't seem to relax enough to notice, God is present. We walk along, paying attention to our own worries, then, in breaking of bread, in the sharing of a meal or a conversation, suddenly our eyes are opened and we recognize Jesus with us. Or an old brown weed opens our hearts to the awareness that God continues to create miracles of new life and growth out of the times that seem meaningless and senseless. When have you felt hopeless or deeply lonely or blinded by worry and then have been surprised by the joy of recognizing Jesus in your life? Where is God calling you to notice and hear God's message of grace and life?

God of life and new life, God of grace and resurrection, speak to us today. Free us from our worries and troubles. Be with those of us who are living through desperate and challenging situations. Open our eyes to the ways you are with us. Surprise us with your joy. We pray in the name of the risen Christ. Amen.