

## SERMON FOR APRIL 30, 2017

I want you to look at the slide that is on the screen in front of you. This is a painting done in 1605 by one Pieter Cornelisz van Rijck. The title is "Kitchen Scene with Supper at Emmaus. Take a few minutes and let your eyes wander over the details. Now take a minute and look at the composition. What draws your eye? And what do you have to search for?

I met this painting this week on a blog that I read every so often. I had never seen it before. It think the subdued colours attracted me. Even with the quiet colours, the painting is really busy and full of detail.

I was fascinated by the actual kitchen scene, the foreground, the place that compels our attention. Just look at what is going on there. There are live animals-a pet dog and chickens. There is a child sitting on the floor beside a woman on a stool. No day care in those days. The woman is preparing food, cutting with a knife.

Next there is a table of butchered meat and poultry. You will notice carcasses on the walls as well. This is no kitchen for vegetarians or for the Waterloo Health Department. Beside the table, on the floor is a round basket with a large fish in it.

In the middle section of the picture, there is another woman tending the pot that is on the fire. Servants on the move are pictured in this mid-section, bustling about. The scene is chaotic and messy. I feel the energy of that

kitchen, the noise of voices and footsteps, the clang of pots and utensils, the pulse of life that comes with orders that need to be filled and hunger satisfied,

It took me a while, but finally, I saw two patches of calm and order in the scene. Both are at the back of the kitchen. The first one is in the middle, a pantry of sorts where one person works alone. That was my first relief from the hustle, from the sounds of voices, the smell of food.

The second relief came from the back right of the painting, up a few stone steps and out of the fray. Here there are people seated at a table, with an energy that is totally different from the rest of the kitchen. Here are the two disciples who spent the day after resurrection on the road to Emmaus, who met a stranger on the way, a stranger whom they invited to stay with them at this inn and share supper together.

Up those steps and at that table, the three ate food prepared in the kitchen. And after the meal, the stranger took bread, blessed and broke it. It was in the breaking of the bread that the confused and weary disciples recognized Jesus and knew that death was not as strong as love.

On the road to Emmaus, there was bewilderment about what happened at Jesus' tomb. The women said this; the men said that. Some saw this and others saw that. But the breaking of the bread cleared the disciples' vision and sharpened their understanding. I could feel that moment of comprehension when my eye was drawn up the stone steps to the place where the bread of life was shared.

What do we learn from our few moments with Pieter van Rijck? We learn that Easter reveals itself in the chaos of human life, amidst the everyday work and worry, in moments of busyness and upheaval. Easter comes in the on-goingness of human being. It is not tidy, with Good Friday over and forgotten as new life rises. So, van Rijck's kitchen didn't have to close in order to accommodate transformation. Easter happens wherever we are, whenever the time is right. It is not afraid of chaos. It does not wait until we are managing perfectly. It does not need us to be in control, or certain, or completely in tune with transformation and prepared for it. The mystery unfolds in a corner of the kitchen where life is in process and so are we. We need to watch for it.

Resurrection does not only reveal itself in chaos. It creates chaos. Easter shifts our paradigm of understanding: first life, then death. It upsets our familiar, way of knowing how the world works, even if we are not crazy about how the world works. Easter means that we cannot give up because we know change, radical change, can happen. Easter means that we cannot be cynical or stuck. It asks us to be hopeful, and being hopeful and staying hopeful is hard work. When the world looks like van Rijck's kitchen, busy, unfinished, a mingling of life and death, it is not easy to hold fast to the promise.

But in the corner, so easily passed over, so easily ignored in the big challenges we and our world face, someone is breaking bread to heal our spirits and bring us hope. In the corners, Easter energy is liberated for our healing and

**a new reality is released in our weary world and for our broken hearts. Love is stronger than death. What is broken open heals us. Peace is possible.**

**Don't let the chaos fool you. It is in its midst that the bread is broken and new life takes hold.**