SERMON:

In a small Theological College, a tutor asked a first-year student to preach in the chapel.

The novice worked all night on a sermon, but still came up empty.

At the appropriate time, he stood in the pulpit, looked out over his brothers and said, **“Do you know what I’m going to say?”** They all shook their heads “no” and he said,

**“Neither do** I, **the service has ended, go in peace.”**

Well, the tutor was angry, and told the student,

“You will preach again tomorrow, and you had better have a sermon.”

Again, the novitiate stayed up all night, but still no sermon.

When he stood in the pulpit, he asked **“Do you know what I am going to say?”** All the students nodded “yes” so the preacher said,

“Then there is no need for me to tell you. **The service has ended, to in peace.”**

Now, the tutor was livid. “Son, you have one more chance.

Preach the gospel tomorrow or you will be expelled from the college.”

Again he worked all night, and the next morning stood before his classmates and asked “Do you know what I am going to say?”

Half of them nodded “yes” while the other half shook their heads “no.” The novitiate said,

“Those who know, tell those who don’t know.

**The service has ended, go in peace.”**

Amazingly, his time, the tutor smiled and said,

“Hmmm…those who know, tell those who don’t know? …..

**Today, the gospel has been proclaimed. The service has ended, go in peace.”**

As Luke tells the Easter story, several women discovered the empty tomb.  They had taken spices to the tomb on Easter morning to prepare Jesus' body for burial, but instead found themselves confronted by two angels who asked,

**"Why do you look for the living among the dead?**

**He isn't here but is risen”.**

So the women left the tomb and reported this news to the disciples.  But the disciples didn't believe the women.  They considered their report, **nonsense.**  After all, these were just women!  What did they know!

But Peter didn't dismiss their report.  Peter ran to the tomb and found it as the women had described it.  The tomb **was** open.  The linen cloths that had wrapped Jesus' body were lying there - no longer in use.

Peter went home amazed - not sure what to think!

Then Luke tells this story of the two disciples on the Emmaus Road.

On Easter afternoon, these two disciples were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus, a distance of about seven miles.

They had been in Jerusalem for the Passover, but it had been a terrible Passover.  They were disciples of Jesus, and had had the shock of their lives when they learned that Jesus had been crucified.  They could hardly believe it!

Luke says that as they were walking along that dusty road toward their Emmaus home, they were talking with each other about the things that had happened.

One thing that had happened, of course, was the crucifixion.  But another thing was the report that,

**the tomb was empty.**

These two disciples discussed those things as they walked along - trying to make sense out of nonsense.

* Why would anyone kill Jesus?
* What had gone wrong?
* Why would the tomb be empty?
* Would the authorities hunt down the disciples next?

These two disciples must have wondered if their lives might be in danger.

And then a stranger joined them -a stranger who seemed to know nothing about Jesus.   So they began to tell this stranger about Jesus - how he was "prophet mighty in deed and word" - how the chief priests and leaders handed Jesus over to be crucified - how the disciples had hoped that Jesus would be the one, but their hopes had been dashed by His death.

They also told him about the women's report that **the tomb was empty.**

But then the stranger interrupted them.  He said,

**"Foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!"**   Then the stranger went on to teach these two men the scriptures - scriptures that they had studied since they were children.  He taught them things that they had never heard before.

When they arrived in Emmaus.  The sun was beginning to set, so these two disciples invited him to stay for the night.

Jesus joined them for dinner.

**"When (Jesus) had sat down at the table with them,**

**he took the bread and gave thanks.**

**Breaking it, he gave it to them”.**

We recognize those words, don't we!  They are very much like the words we use in Holy Communion.  Jesus,

**"took the bread and gave thanks.**

**Breaking it, he gave it to them."**

Listen to what Luke says next.  He says:

**"Their eyes were opened,**

**and they recognized him" (v. 31a).**

**And then Jesus vanished from their sight.**

So even though night was falling, and it was seven miles to Jerusalem, these two disciples got up from their dinner table and walked back to the city so they could tell the other disciples what they had seen.

They found the apostles and the other disciples talking excitedly about Peter, who had seen Jesus.  Then Luke concludes the story with these words.  He says:

**The two "related the things that happened along the way,**

**and how (Jesus) had been known to them,**

**in the breaking of the bread"**.

"Jesus had been made known to them" - just as Jesus is made known to us today in the breaking of bread.

End of story!  It's an unusual story - told only by Luke - but it's famous.

Google "Emmaus Road" and you will get hundreds of hits:

When I read the Emmaus Road story again this year, one of the things that stood out for me was that Jesus picked two **Minor Players** for a role in his **Major Story**.

 We know the name of one of them – Cleopas - but we know nothing at all about his companion.   Were they buddies?  Were they husband and wife?  Nobody knows!

But in Luke's Gospel, Cleopas and his companion were two of the first three people to see the risen Lord.

I don't think that happened by accident.   I think that Jesus chose to reveal himself to Cleopas and the unnamed disciple for good reason.

Perhaps Jesus wanted encourage the rest of us - nobody disciples.  Most of us are unknown Christians once we get a mile or two from the church - and much of the work that we do for Jesus seems pretty minor.  We go through our churchy routines.  We conduct worship.  We teach our children about Jesus.  We have youth groups.  We have Bible study groups.  We help people in need.

BUT we are pretty ordinary.  We are ordinary Christians doing ordinary things.  Nothing earth-shaking!  Nothing newsworthy!

We’re not expecting a call this week from the newspaper asking what we have planned for Sunday.

But it was people like us to whom Jesus chose to reveal himself that first Easter afternoon.

Perhaps Jesus did that as a way of showing us that he would do most of his work through ordinary disciples -people of ordinary means - people with ordinary jobs - people not very well known - **people like you and me.**

And, in fact, that's exactly what has happened during the past twenty centuries.  There have been big names in the church - Wesley, Calvin, Luther, etc.) - just like there were two or three big names among the apostles.

But for every big name there have been a million no-name Christians - and most of the church's work has been done by these no-name Christians.  That's been true over the centuries and is still true today.

Most church work today gets done by people whose names we would not recognize - people like you and me.

* So we need to hear that it was PEOPLE LIKE US whom Jesus chose as his first disciples.
* It was PEOPLE LIKE US to whom the risen Christ revealed himself on Easter afternoon.
* It was PEOPLE LIKE US who kept the church going for the past twenty centuries.
* And it's PEOPLE LIKE US through whom Christ does most of his work today.

Perhaps we also need to remember that the Holy Spirit multiplies the small acts of service that we render in Christ's name.

• Perhaps, when we get to heaven, God will show us wonder after wonder that he accomplished through our small but faithful service.

* Perhaps God will show us a life that was changed because of a kind word that we said.
* Perhaps God will show us a man who became a good husband and father because we taught him well in Tygre Club –
* or a woman who became a good wife and mother because we were there for her in a youth group when she was a teenager.
* Perhaps God will reveal to us blessing after blessing that blossomed from our ordinary lives and our faithful but ordinary service.

As a baby of nineteen months, Helen Keller suffered an illness that left her deaf and blind.  Unable to communicate, she grew up filled with frustration and rage.  But her parents sought help, and the help that they found came from a young woman - Anne Sullivan.

Anne worked with Helen and helped her to learn a new language through touch.  Their breakthrough story is famous.  Anne pumped water over Helen's hands and then touched Helen's hands in a pattern that was supposed to mean "water."  Suddenly, Helen realised, for the first time that it would be possible for her to learn words - to communicate.  Anne and Helen danced for joy around that old water pump.

Helen went on to become a world-famous speaker and writer.  She lived a long life and inspired several generations with her accomplishments. She said:

**"I long to accomplish a great and noble task,**

**but it is my chief duty to accomplish small tasks,**

**as if they were great and noble.**

Let’s ask ourselves what we could be doing for Jesus.

Then do it in the assurance that God will bless our work.

He will transform the ordinariness of our work and cause it to flower in ways that we would never have imagined.

And let’s do it in the assurance that God will bless us, too, as we give of ourselves.

**Give a blessing and receive a blessing.**

**That's the way the kingdom of God works.**