



THE WALK TO EMMAUS

April 26, 2020

Introduction and Welcome

Call to Worship (by Carol Penner)

We need your presence on the long road, Lord. The road between fear and hope, the road between the place where all is lost and the place of resurrection. Like the disciples walking the road to Emmaus, we are in need of your company! Jesus, stand among us, in your risen power, in this time of worship, and in every hour.

Reading the Word: Luke 24:13-35

Message: "Walking with Jesus" — Rev. Dr. Deb Hanson

Prayer:

We walk the path with each other, God, longing to see Jesus, questioning all that is happening in our lives, wondering what life will be like after COVID-19, wishing for this all to come to an end. It will. Although we don't know the outcome, we find our hearts burning within us because we have the promise of the risen Savior who has died and been raised for us. He has given us assurance that at the end there is still life, still family, friends, and the hope of renewal and restoration. We cling to that promise, and we know that even when we don't recognize Jesus, he really is there. We can keep walking because he is on the path of life with us. Thank you, gracious and loving God. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer (unison)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Blessing



SERMON TRANSCRIPT GIVEN BY
REV. DR. DEB HANSON

READING OF THE WORD:

Luke 24:13-35 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

The Walk to Emmaus

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.” Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in 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. They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us[f] while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread

Message Rev. Dr. Deb Hanson

“When [Jesus] was at table with them, he took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” Luke 24:30-32 (NRSV)

In one of the churches I served years ago, a youth group member emailed me and asked what my favorite Bible passage was. Wow - I had no idea what to say because I don't have just one, but many! However, today's reading from Luke 24 13-35 is definitely on that list.

It speaks to me about taking the journey of faith, and how Jesus enters into our lives even when we aren't really aware of his presence. The two who were on the road to Emmaus after Jesus death on a cross and burial were devastated along with so many of his other followers. For them it seemed like their hopes were dashed and a bright future was gone. What were they going to do now?

As they walked, a stranger appeared beside them, as was so often the custom in Jesus' day. People would welcome someone else on their journey for companionship and safety reasons. But this stranger was different from others who may have joined them. This one opened the scriptures to them, taught them and inspired them, making their hearts burn within them, just as Jesus had done.

We might think that they would have recognized Jesus from what he said to them, but they didn't; however they did listen and feel a rekindling of hope from this man's teachings and words. Once they reached Emmaus, Jesus acted as if he would go on, but they offered him hospitality, as was the custom in that day. It was when he lifted the bread and broke it that they finally recognized him, and he vanished from their sight. With great excitement and wings on their feet, they hurried back to Jerusalem to tell the disciples. Indeed, Jesus was alive!

Whenever I hear or read this story, I am reminded of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, who struggled with his own salvation. A Moravian friend told him to keep preaching faith and he would find it. One evening, “he reluctantly attended a [Moravian] meeting in Aldersgate. Someone read from Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. He wrote in his journal: About 8:45 p.m. ‘while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.’” (<https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1701-1800/john-wesleys-heart-strangely-warmed-11630227.html>)

Even the founder of Methodism struggled with knowing and trusting in Christ for his forgiveness of sins and salvation. Wesley was eventually banned from the Church of England for his radical ideas about life in Christ, so he called the world his parish and preached to the poor and outcast, to the common laborers, and anyone who would listen to him. In the strengthening of his faith, he had found the passion for a message that would bring many others to Christ, as well.

How many of us struggle to know Jesus in our hearts - not just in our heads or what we read in the scriptures or what we see in others? A former parishioner of mine was worried that she didn't have that "heart-warming" feeling in her faith. She kept asking me if she was supposed to be more enthusiastic or feel more emotion toward God. After several conversations about it, she decided that her faith was strong; she believed in God and in Jesus as her Savior; and she was work in progress, so she would continue to grow in her faith, trusting God to lead her.

There is no prescription or definition of how we are to feel when we believe, only that we believe. And when we struggle and doubt, to keep on trying, to keep on trusting that Jesus walks with us, even when we don't see him.

The story of the Walk to Emmaus is one of spiritual eye-opening, heart-warming, and realization that Jesus can be with us wherever we are and in whatever happens. He was revealed to the two on the road through the breaking of the bread, an act of sharing a meal and giving a blessing.

Whether we are having lunch with a friend (when we are able to do that again!), doing the dishes, raking leaves, taking a walk, at work, going for a ride in the car, participating in a ZOOM meeting, watching TV, or any regular ordinary activity in our lives, Jesus is there.

The other night, I was sitting in our living room watching TV, and I looked out our slider to see a tree formation with a little circle in the middle. Light from the sun beamed right through it, and surrounding it through the branches were the beautiful hues of the sunset. It was a pause in the middle of doing something ordinary that reminded me that we aren't alone.

There is a Creator out there who has given us so much to enjoy in spite of needing to stay home. Maybe this whole time with COVID-19 has opened doors for us to enjoy nature and all of God's creation. Maybe it is a time for us to open our eyes and allow our hearts to burn within us as we realize that life isn't first and foremost about things, accumulation, or the material possessions we have, but about people, caring for ourselves and others, and recognizing Christ in our midst.

Maybe this time is for us, as the old saying goes, “to stop and smell the roses” or see the geese, blue herons, or ducks on a pond or see trees and light in different ways. We have opportunities to connect with family members and friends and cherish them, as well as let them know how much they mean to us. This is when the things we take for granted may suddenly make us aware that Christ is in our midst and we can trust in his presence and follow his teachings.

This week, as you move through your week, no matter where you are, I hope you find ways to walk the walk with Jesus, to share the gifts of life, love, and kindness. We can stop to notice and pay attention to things that we may not have realized were right in front of us. Take time to find Christ in the everyday events or in the quietness or in the actions of others. Keep a blessings journal. Know that you are not alone. Not only is Jesus with us, but we have each other, even from a distance. No one can take away the love in Christ that we have for one another.

Jesus is here - right now and always. What a blessing and what a gift!

Song:

Open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus,
to reach out and touch him, and say that we love him.

Open our ears, Lord, and help us to listen.

Open our yes, Lord, we want to see Jesus. (The Faith We Sing #2086) Amen.