

The Third Sunday of Easter: April 18th, 2021



On the Road to Emmaus

Lord Jesus, open to us the Scriptures; make our hearts burn within us while you speak. (Luke 24: 32)

The Readings: Acts 3: 12-19 Psalm 4 1 John 3:1-7

The Collect: O God, your Son made Himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread. Open the eyes of our faith, that we may see Him in His redeeming work, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

The Holy Gospel: Luke 24: 13b-35

¹³Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then 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?” ¹⁹He 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, ²⁰and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹But 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. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and 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. ²⁴Some 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.” ²⁵Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. ²⁸As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹But 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. ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They 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?” ³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.



Sermon: Did you ever wonder what the Scriptures might have to say to us about the crushing of our expectations during Covid? Well here's the story! It is encapsulated in the words "We had hoped...."

Well, I had hoped our church would be open again months and months ago. I had hoped that beloved family would not become infected. I had hoped that Gregory's 13th birthday this weekend could have included his friends; could have been a grand celebration for a brand new teenager. I had hoped that I could take communion into people's homes. I had hoped to see my out of town friends. You can make your own list of "I had hoped...." I'm sure we all have one.

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus told the stranger how walked along side them about Jesus, saying "We had hoped.....that He would be the One to redeem Israel.....but....." These two people were crushingly disappointed and indeed devastated.

So who were they? We are told the name of one....Cleopas. The second disciple is not named. And that tells us a lot. First, that person was almost certainly a woman. No one would ever have left out the name of a second male disciple....it would be a gross rudeness. And no one, in that time and climate, would ever name a woman as a disciple for fear of reprisal. Better to stay silent and just avoid the issue. So I'm sure Cleopas walked with a woman. And I am equally sure that woman was his wife, or they would certainly not have been on the road together. Jesus, however, had no scruples about gender and discipleship... many women, along with many men, followed Him, heard His teachings, helped support Him, participated in mission and so on. These two were not "the 12" but they were disciples none the less. As are we. Each of us. Disciples can be sadly disappointed.

Now on the remedy. Jesus did not immediately identify Himself. He didn't just say "don't be sad, things will all turn out okay, or everyone gets it wrong sometimes". Jesus told them the Sacred Story. He told them not to be foolish but to remember, to call to mind, what they already knew. Beginning with the prophets, Jesus told them all the things the Hebrew Scriptures had said about Himself, and how that related to what had happened so recently in Jerusalem. He spoke the Word.



We are told they invited to stay for dinner. At one point, He blessed and broke Bread and gave it to them. Instantly, the scales fell from their eyes or their hearts or minds....and they KNEW that Jesus was sitting at table with them. And the instant they knew, He vanished. He had accomplished the healing for their crushing wound of disappointment.

Re-energized and full excitement they raced back down the road from Emmaus to Jerusalem, and found the disciples in the Upper Room again and told them that Jesus had been with them along the road, and they had realized it in the breaking of the Bread. What a confirmation for the 11 disciples who had come to believe that Jesus was indeed risen from the dead. What a joy to know that His reappearance was not just a one-time thing. They could hope to see Him again. And they would....just finish the rest of the chapter.

So what has this to say to all of us who have made our “We had hoped....” list. Well, here are a few quick lessons about dealing with disappointment in the here and now of our lives. (Please note: if you a real keener with a great memory, you might think these words sound familiar...they are! I have copied them from a previous sermon because they are exactly what I want to say now too).

First, when grief and that shadow of the valley of death engulf you, don't be surprised if you can't see Jesus, even if He is standing right in front of your face. Find a companion and “Just Keep. Walking”. **Second**: It will be in the company of others, often while eating or extending hospitality, that you will find yourself most “open” to glimpses of the risen Christ. “Pot-Lucks” could be seen as “sacramental” if judged by the amount of God's healing they generate. **Third**: When our hearts burn within us, we are not to reach for the Tums, but rather get moving and “go and tell”. **Fourth**: the way to restore faith, build trust, witness to others, and have our own eyes opened more constantly to the Presence of Christ is to read, hear, and speak the Story...the Scriptures...the Word of God. Need help with forgiveness? Re-read the story of Joseph and his brothers. Want to understand where lies will lead you? Check our Jacob and Esau. Wonder if that mountain holding you back is just too high to ever get over? Take a walk with

Gideon. Wonder if Jesus really loves you? Read His prayers for you recorded by John. Troubles with your neighbours...a little Leviticus and some Matthew will resolve just about any dispute.

We don't need a new teaching or big expensive program in order to be witnesses to our neighbours. We just need to be able to tell the story...of what God did long ago, and of what God is doing in our lives right now. It would be great if each of us chose a particular Biblical story that we have found life-changing and use that to respond if any one ever gets into a conversation with us involving our faith or practice. It is wonderful if someone asks "How did you ever cope with that?" and we respond "My faith in Jesus helped me". That is a testimony, but it is not one which invites further conversation. If we responded with 'Let me tell you just how... I could never have forgiven that thing if I hadn't read about Joseph and how he came to forgive his brothers who have sold him off as a slave...' Telling that story is more likely to get their attention than a simple stated about "my faith". Give it a try and see what you think!

During this pandemic, the "Sacrament of the Word" has stood alone, apart from the Sacraments of Bread and Wine, yet every time we worship in our homes, every time we read the Gospel story, we can experience the risen Christ, and be strengthened to go and tell the Story. May we continue to do everything we can to hasten the day when we can again be fed with Word and Bread and Wine, and may God grant us courage and hope until that day arrives! Amen.

Meditation: (music and lyrics by Carey Landry, Carey Landry and North American Liturgy Resources , 1985)

We are companions on the journey, breaking bread and sharing life;
and in the love we bear is the hope we share
for we believe in the love of our God, we believe in the love of our God.

No longer strangers to each other, no longer strangers in God's house;
We are fed and we are nourished by the strength of those who care,
By the strength of those who care.

We are companions on the journey, breaking bread and sharing life;
and in the love we bear is the hope we share

for we believe in the love of our God, we believe in the love of our God.

We have been gifted with each other, and we are called by the Word of the Lord:

to act with justice, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with our God,
to walk humbly with our God.

We are companions on the journey, breaking bread and sharing life;

and in the love we bear is the hope we share

for we believe in the love of our God, we believe in the love of our God.

We will seek and we shall find; we will knock and the door shall be opened;

We will ask and it shall be given, for we believe in the love of our God,

We believe in the love of our God.

We are companions on the journey, breaking bread and sharing life;

and in the love we bear is the hope we share

for we believe in the love of our God, we believe in the love of our God.

(you can google Companions on the Journey and hear the tune played and sung on utube – it was a feature song in the “March for Jesus” decade years!)

Prayer:

Lord Jesus stand among us, speak the Word to our hearts until they burn within us, send your Holy Spirit upon us that we may go and speak the Word to others...without You, it is hopeless; with You, all things are possible. To You be honour and praise and glory for ever and ever amen.

The Blessing of Eastertide: (BAS 684)

May the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever Amen.

