**Walking with Jesus**

**Luke 24:13-35**

Emmaus was a small village about seven miles from Jerusalem; the journey between the two would normally take about two hours to walk.  In our Scripture for today, on the afternoon of Jesus’ resurrection, two of His pre-crucifixion followers started down the road to Emmaus.  Their whole attitude and appearance was one of sadness and depression.  Luke does not give us the details of their conversation, but as they walked they were talking about the perplexing reports of the empty tomb.  The situation had clearly left these two travelers in a state of bewilderment.  They were so deeply immersed in their conversation that they hardly noticed when Jesus began walking with them.  As Jesus joined them, He must have looked like just another traveler.  Often Jesus is nearest when it seems all hope is gone; He hears and responds when we earnestly seek Him.

Jesus was a master when it came to asking questions.  Often He used them to rebut His enemies, but frequently it was for the purpose of making people state their problems.  As Jesus walked with these travelers, He asked, ***“. . . ‘What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?’. . .”*** [**Luke 24:17**, NRSV]  The effect of Jesus’ question stopped the two companions in their tracks; Luke wrote, ***“. . . They stood still, looking sad.”*** [**Luke 24:17**, NRSV]  The Greek word translated into English as “sad” suggests both astonishment and displeasure.  Cleopas was then identified as one of the two travelers; his response to the Lord’s question tells us that the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus had stirred all Jerusalem.  Cleopas and his companion could not believe that even a stranger to the city would not have known about the recent events that had taken place there.

Jesus intentionally seemed unfamiliar with the events of which Cleopas spoke when He asked, ***“. . . ‘What things?. . .”*** [**Luke 24:18**, NRSV]  Jesus’ pretend unfamiliarity opened the way for Him to explain the meaning of the very things the two travelers did not understand.  From their response, the two companions obviously had understood Jesus to be a prophet, a teacher sent by God; He was mighty in deed before God as well as before of the people.  Without a doubt, they had believed at one time that Jesus was the promised Deliverer, but now He was dead.  Their own leaders had given Him up to be crucified.  The report of the women was overshadowed by the fact that they had seen Jesus die with their own eyes.  Up until the previous Friday, they had hoped that Jesus would free Israel from Roman bondage, but that hope had died with Jesus and no report from a few grief-stricken women was going to change that.

When Jesus rejoined the conversation, He rebuked them, saying, **“. . . ‘Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!’”** [**Luke 24:25**, NRSV]  At that moment, Jesus could have shown them the scars in His hands and feet, but He chose rather to point them to the Scriptures.  Cleopas and his companion had not grasped all that the prophets had plainly spoken.  They believed that the Messiah would come and establish His kingdom, but they did not believe in a suffering Savior, so Jesus began a systematic Bible study.  He diverted their attention from rumors and suppositions to the solid foundation of the teaching of the prophets.  Luke did not indicate which passages Jesus chose; it is clear throughout the *Old Testament*, however, that there was a consistent divine purpose which made Calvary inevitable.  All that was written concerning the prophesied Messiah applied to Jesus.  Though the two travelers had strong ideas of what Moses and the prophets taught, they had wrong ideas about the cross.  Can you imagine what it must have been like to listen to Jesus Himself interpreting Scripture?  We cannot literally walk with Jesus as the two travelers did, but we can search the Scriptures daily and allow Jesus to open our eyes to the truth of His Word.

As Jesus expounded the Scriptures to the two travelers, they drew near to the village of Emmaus where apparently they lived.  Jesus did not ask if He could spend the night with them or even hint that He needed to find lodging; instead, He started to resume His walk.  Cleopas and his companion, though, had been so impressed with Jesus’ exposition of the Scriptures that they pleaded with Him to spend the night in their home.  They did not yet know it was Jesus, but they did not want to part ways with this remarkable Stranger.  They pointed out that the sun would soon set and that robbers and wild beasts might hide in the darkness, which would make it unsafe to continue traveling.  In response to their earnest desire, we see the courteousness of Jesus as He stayed to eat with those who offered Him an invitation.  If we want the risen Jesus to fellowship with us, our desire to be in His presence must be great enough to detain Him.

These two travelers shared their home and a meal with a Stranger who had joined them as they walked.  Seemingly, neither of the two thought it strange when Jesus, acting as the Host, took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them; perhaps they saw unusual act as a natural gesture because of that newfound relationship.  When Jesus handed them the bread, ***“. . . their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; . . .”*** [**Luke 24:31**, NRSV]  Though we are now familiar with this story, the first time we read it, their recognition of Jesus’ true identity was sudden and unexpected.  Following this revelation, because He had accomplished His purpose, Jesus vanished out of their sight.  Though He was now gone, they had seen the risen Jesus; their hospitality had been richly rewarded.

Jesus’ exposition of the Scriptures as these travelers walked with Him on the road of life so affected them that their hearts glowed within them; in essence, the study of the Scriptures in their dark hour of fear and doubt brought new faith and assurance.  As we continue traveling down the road of a global pandemic, I think the thoughtful study of God’s Word will both strengthen our faith and reinforce our assurance, as well.  The Word reinforced what they had just seen, Jesus was indeed the Christ and He was alive!  In effect, they said, “We should have known who our Companion on the road was.”  Nonetheless, after finally recognizing the risen Jesus, these two disciples were so moved by the love of God that they did not even finish their meal; instead, they immediately left their home to return to Jerusalem.  There was no longer any fear of a night journey.   Their Lord and Savior had risen and they had to tell others of their experience.  May the resurrection of Jesus so inspire us.

The incident that took place on the road to Emmaus shows that Jesus will reveal Himself to us in the privacy of our own life, in daily affairs.  How sad that our eyes are often dimmed by unbelief and we fail to recognize His presence.  We walk along discouraged in troubled times, like the ongoing pandemic, when we should be rejoicing in His companionship.  When we really see Jesus, it will change us, just as it changed Cleopas and his companion.

Let us pray together: Risen Jesus, like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, we often struggle to recognize You in the everyday journey of our lives.  Even so, we seek Your wisdom in the midst of the questions we have about the unfamiliar circumstances we now ﬁnd ourselves in.  Open our eyes to Your work of transformation in and around us.  As we walk with You day by day, give us the graciousness to make all our conversations holy.  As You opened the Scriptures to the Cleopas and his companion and taught them everything, open our eyes to behold You in Your Word, and in our seeing, help us to recognize and welcome the stranger in our midst.  So often we forget that You invite us to abide with You.  We thank You that You travel with us in our joys and our concerns, Amen.

**Pastor Mike**

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