

Sermon: Grow by walking

Scripture: Luke 24:13-35

April 26, 2020

Westminster Presbyterian Church

Springfield, Illinois

Today, we look at one of the most well-known account of our Risen Christ's appearances after his resurrection; a story about how Jesus interacted with two travelers on the road to Emmaus. It is the first of three resurrection appearances found in Luke, which highlights that we must ask our Redeemer to open our eyes to see the truth of God's Word, to witness how Jesus works in our lives, and to focus at the heart of the matter of our intimate fellowship with him. Let us listen to the Word of the Lord, from Luke 24:13-27.

<sup>13</sup> Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles<sup>Ⓜ</sup> from Jerusalem, <sup>14</sup> and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. <sup>15</sup> While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, <sup>16</sup> but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. <sup>17</sup> And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad.<sup>Ⓜ</sup> <sup>18</sup> 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?" <sup>19</sup> He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth,<sup>Ⓜ</sup> who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, <sup>20</sup> and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. <sup>21</sup> But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.<sup>Ⓜ</sup> Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. <sup>22</sup> Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> 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." <sup>25</sup> Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! <sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary that the Messiah<sup>Ⓜ</sup> should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" <sup>27</sup> Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

We continue from where we left off on the road to Emmaus. As we come to the conclusion of this seven-mile walk, let us listen for the immeasurable grace of Jesus in these verses. Listen to the Word of the Lord from Luke 24:28-35.

<sup>28</sup> As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. <sup>31</sup> Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. <sup>32</sup> They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us<sup>[a]</sup> while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" <sup>33</sup> That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. <sup>34</sup> They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" <sup>35</sup> Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God, amen.

Let us pray. Risen Lord, like those disciples on the road to Emmaus, open our eyes that we may witness the beauty of your Word and experience the transformation in and around us. May the Words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be pleasing to you, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

What would you do once our stay-at-home orders are lifted? There must be lot of different answers, but I think it would be safe to assume that it involves leaving your house. We all love our home, sweet home, but there is only so much we can take. We are yearning for something new, something else than what we can experience within the walls of our own home. Although it is a complete different set of reasons, we can understand the mindset of Cleopas and his traveling companion's reason for wanting to leave Jerusalem. They wanted an escape from their current circumstances and anywhere would be better than Jerusalem. No one knows why they have chosen Emmaus. It is a small, insignificant place, and maybe it is meant to be a metaphorical place, an arbitrary place, a physiological depiction of our longing for restoration of ourselves.

As many of us started gathering by virtual means, it seems we all are experiencing that although it satisfies our desire to be with one another, it only does so much. We are realizing that our hunger is beyond physical, that is also spiritual and emotional. We hunger for life, love, belonging, meaning, purpose. Yes, it would be nice to go grab a nice juicy burger, but it would be more meaningful if I was with my friends and family. Personally, I think I would get more mileage out of getting a haircut at this time to satisfy my emotional hunger than my physical hunger. Like Cleopas and his companion, we are also on our own Emmaus journey, looking for a way to be made whole physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually once again.

I would like to ask another question that would lead us to the main point of today's sermon. What would you do if you just accomplished a milestone, perhaps the greatest achievement in your life? Without a doubt, there will be a celebration matching the gravity of such milestone with all your people. They would celebrate who you are and what you have achieved, may it be your 16<sup>th</sup> birthday or 90<sup>th</sup>, your promotion or retirement. Guess what Jesus did after his greatest achievement: he went for a walk. Not with his posse, no entourage of disciples or a crowd celebrating his resurrection as the prophecies foretold. No victory laps for defeating death in the depths of hell through the cross on the streets of Jerusalem where cloaks and palm branches were laid for him days prior. There is not even a mention of angel armies or cherubim and seraphim dancing in the heavenly realm. Jesus who conquered sin and death for all humanity and all of creation quietly decides to take an intimate stroll with two broken souls walking on their Emmaus road seeking to be made whole once again.

What is amazing about Emmaus story is Jesus' unfathomable love and his persistence to court us. Even when we are walking away from the promise of God, it is Jesus himself that appears to us. When we have lost hope in the midst of disruption and uncertain future, it is Jesus who draws near and reignites the passion that was lost. When we feel like we have lost our sense of direction in life and our spiritual compass is not pointing to Jerusalem, it is Jesus who accompanies us along the journey so that we can find a way back. We worship a God whose focus is not on the destination, but on the journey itself. God cares more about

matters of our hearts rather than our works, for even in our worldly logic, we know what type of results one can expect by seeing the character and attitude of an individual.

Emmaus story must be one of my mentor's foundation of faith as he taught me that I need to be very careful of what I ask for in my prayers. God does not simply give an answer to our requests in prayer; God gives us an opportunity instead. When we ask for courage, God does not simply anoint us with oil of courage but gives us an opportunity to be courageous. When we ask for patience, God places us in the middle of challenging scenario to practice our patience. When we ask for an ability to see what God sees, we will be given opportunity to serve the needy. Jesus did not give his disciples fishes or followers, but to be fishers of people.

As Cleopas and his partner's eyes were opened, they too had an opportunity to grow in their faith. When they realized that their hearts were burning with passion within while Jesus was talking to them about the Scriptures and walking with them, they had a choice to make. Do they take a bold step back towards Jerusalem, to act out their faith and courage or do they continue from Emmaus to next destination to satisfy their hunger to be made whole again? Likewise, we grow in faith by walking with Christ and walking towards our Jerusalem in our hearts by having hope and trust in the promises of God found in the Scripture.

Each time we choose to respond to follow our hearts and walk towards Jerusalem, God will strengthen us on our journey. As Prophet Isaiah have written:

Have you not known? Have you not heard?

The LORD is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.

The Lord does not faint or grow weary;  
God's understanding is unsearchable.

God gives power to the faint,  
and strengthens the powerless.

Even youths will faint and be weary,  
and the young will fall exhausted;

<sup>31</sup>but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength,  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint.<sup>1</sup>

So let us ask the Lord to help us grow in faith by doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with our Risen Christ today.<sup>2</sup> Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 40:28-31

<sup>2</sup> Micah 6:8