

EASTER 3 2008

Luke 24:13-35 "We Had Hoped"

Emmaus is an unknown town in ancient history. No mention is made of it in extra biblical sources. And Cleopas is only mentioned this once in scripture. Luke records this encounter to throw light on the strange and miraculous appearance of Jesus after the resurrection. It is a transition piece to help us understand the presence of the risen Christ among us.

Professor Frederick Buechner has written of this Emmaus walk...["Emmaus is whatever we do or wherever we go to make ourselves forget that the world holds nothing sacred; that even the wisest and the bravest and loveliest decay and die...Emmaus is where we go, where Cleopas and his friend went, to try to forget about Jesus and the great failure of his life."](#)

The crucifixion of Jesus was, no doubt, a devastating blow to the disciples. They had such great hopes. They had hoped that Jesus would be the one to redeem Israel from bondage to foreign domination. They had hoped that the Palm Sunday parade would continue into halls of glory. They had hoped that the Romans would have been thrown out of their country and that the Kingdom of God would have come in power. So they said, "We had hoped". What sad words. Who hasn't experienced that feeling...to have hopes shattered... hopes for the future, hopes for a successful life, for life without trouble or hardship or disappointment. The world can shatter our hopes so quickly, in a moment, an accident, an illness, a reversal of fortune. The disciples had hoped and their hopes were dashed by the death of Jesus on the cross and so they hid in an upper room or left town. They left perhaps to get away lest they also get caught up in the evil of innocence crucified.

On one hand this story is easy for us to understand. We understand disappointment, for we experience it also in our lives. We understand fear for that is also a part of this world and our lives. But on the other hand this story is hard for us to understand. It is hard because we have read the last chapter of the book and we know the outcome of the story. We know that Jesus rose from the dead. We know that Jesus conquered death and that he gives us his victory so that we need not be afraid of death or life. But these disciples, Cleopas and his friend on that first Easter day did not know. They had heard the testimony of the women who had gone to the tomb and found it empty. They knew that Peter and John had gone to check it out. But they had not seen Jesus. They did not "see" Jesus even as they walked and talked with him. They were blind because they were looking for something else, a different kind of Messiah.

Professor Wm. Carl of Union Theological Seminary says in a commentary on these verses that ["Many today also don't recognize who Jesus is because they are looking for something else. People today look for a Jesus they can manipulate, one who will bless their life without question. We walk by the homeless beggar on the street on our way to the house of the one we worship who had no home. Some look for an intellectual Jesus who will snicker smugly with us at those Christians who talk about Jesus like he was a personal friend. "Pious faith-talk" we say. Some look for a sweet Jesus with no moral sting to his words lest we be made uncomfortable in our pursuit of the self-centered life. Some look for a quiet Jesus who gets tucked in our Bibles hiding behind red letters. Some look for a social-action Jesus who will lead the charge against what we](#)

consider the evil in our midst. But it is always those "other people" who need to be changed, not us. Some want a hero or a superstar whom we can worship conveniently on Sunday but then leave behind in church for the rest of the week. But somewhere along the road Jesus overtakes us. We may not recognize him at first because we are looking for someone else." (Proclamation 2 Series A, p. 34.)

"The last thing Cleopas and his friend wanted was a dead Jesus. The cross spelled failure, and nobody likes defeat." (Ibid. p. 34). So they went to Emmaus, seven miles away from Jerusalem. They were getting out of town.

And that's when Jesus met them. Jesus met them on the way and walked with them. Those words can be both disturbing and reassuring. Jesus, in his gentle way walks with us. He comes as a friend and companion who comforts us in our fears. Jesus met the disciples and walked with them. But those words can also disturb us. How often we too find ourselves running away to hide from the challenges and the troubles around us. It is then that we discover that Jesus comes and walks with us saying "follow me". Sometimes we don't recognize him. We may not discern see his presence with us but we feel his spirit drawing us to risk and witness to follow and to serve.

Christ Meets Us In His Word.

Mary Magdelene didn't recognize Jesus at the tomb. His word to her enabled her to believe. Jesus spoke to Thomas and he believed. We too see Jesus in his word. Jesus said, "**My sheep hear my voice and I know them.**" (John 10:27). The Bible says, "**Faith comes from what is heard.**" (Romans 10:17).

The two men on the road to Emmaus met Jesus and as he walked with them and talked with them he "opened the scriptures" to them. The Bible remains a closed book until the eye of faith sees in it the wonderful work of God in Christ. You will not find Jesus in "signs and wonders". You will find him in his word and in the word of scripture. The two men who walked with Jesus said, "**Did not our hearts burn within us as he opened to us the scripture?**" Jesus is the key to the Bible. Jesus is the one who opens the scriptures for us. When Jesus "**opened the scriptures**" to these disciples it meant that He used the Old Testament to point to himself as the Messiah. Martin Luther said that the scripture interprets itself and that the New Testament interprets the Old Testament. When you read your Bible, read it with the eye of faith in Jesus and look for ways that it points to Jesus.

The way the scriptures are opened is by reading. You must first open the book. Xian education is important for all ages. Someone has said that Jesus blessed the children and taught the adults and the modern church has turned it around. We bless the adults and teach the children. If you want your faith to grow you should be involved in Sunday School for adults. You can join a small group bible study. Read your Bible. In it you will find the word of life that points to Jesus and the way of salvation.

When you have trouble in life it is good to have a friend walk with you. Jesus is that friend. He knows what it means to face trouble. Jesus has been there. Jesus has gone through suffering and death. Jesus goes with us in this life. He walks with us even into death. We need not be afraid of trouble or death. Jesus is with us.

Christ Meets Us In His Own Way and In His Own Time.

Jesus appeared to these two men as they walked along the road. He appeared to these two, not the inner circle of the 12 but to two men who we never meet again in scripture. Jesus appeared to them and they did not recognize him until he revealed himself in his wounds. They saw the mark of the nails. Jesus appears at his own time and place to whomever he chooses. And he chooses to reveal himself in the shadow of the cross and the mark of the nails.

Christ Meets Us In the Community of Faith.

Along our path of life Jesus meets us and walks with us. He meets us in The Community of Faith...the church. I hope you will never underestimate the importance of belonging to a church. It is a place where your faith will be encouraged. In the fellowship of other believers you experience the "body of Christ". It is here that you hear the most important words you will ever hear in your life... "Your sins are forgiven in Jesus." We need to hear these words often for in hearing them we have hope and reassurance. Your faith is renewed and strengthened by your involvement in the church. I hope you pray for your church, for your pastors and for your friends here. I hope you pray that God will increase their faith and devotion and that thru their witness you might also be strengthened in your faith.

He Appeared through the Breaking of Bread.

The third way the two bewildered disciples realized who Jesus was came when at supper he took the bread and broke it and gave it to them. Jesus makes himself known in scriptures and also in the sacrament. Here in church we recognize the real presence of Christ with us in word and sacrament. It is such a simple thing, bread and wine. Yet the sacrament carries the power of God to create faith in us and to feed that faith. We say that the sacrament is "food for faith". If you don't eat on a regular basis your strength fails. So also with your faith. You feed your faith by regular reading of the word and in participation in worship and sacraments.

In the sacrament we remember the death of Jesus on the cross. But it is more than just a memorial. It is also the indwelling power of God that creates and sustains faith in us. Jesus literally comes to us in Bread and Wine, his body and blood and in eating and drinking his life becomes, in us, the power of life that will live forever.

The road to Emmaus held some surprises for those two disciples. It holds some surprises for us as well. For as we walk thru this life we discover that Jesus walks with us to comfort and to bless, to challenge and to invite us to follow him in faith and hope and joy. And so we pray, "Walk with us this week Lord Jesus." AMEN