

Luke 24:13-49

24:13 Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem,

24:14 and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.

24:15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them,

24:16 but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

24:17 And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad.

24:18 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?"

24:19 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,

24:20 and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him.

24:21 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.

24:22 Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning,

24:23 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.

24:24 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."

24:25 Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!

24:26 Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?"

24:27 Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

24:28 As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on.

24:29 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.

24:30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.

24:31 Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

24:32 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?" 24:33 That same hour they got up and returned

to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. 24:34 They were

saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" 24:35 Then they told what had

happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Communion Meditation

Did you hear that line? "But we had hoped ..." Repeat

David Lose writes, "So much is said in those four words, as they speak of a future that is not to be, a dream that created energy and enthusiasm but did not materialize, a promise that created faith that proved to be false. It speaks of a future that is closed off, now irrelevant, dead. And there are few things more tragic than a dead future. Once challenged to write a short-story in six words, Ernest Hemingway supposedly replied by penning on a napkin: "For Sale: Baby shoes, never used." It's not just the tragedy of what happened that hurts, but the gaping hole of all that could have happened but won't."ⁱ

"But we had hoped ..." A haunting phrase that sums up the human condition of loss and disappointment. They are heartbreaking words. They are not the only words, but they are honest. They are true. You may have said them yourself.

We had hoped that she could have gotten into her school of choice.

We had hoped that the test results would come back negative.

We had hoped that our child didn't have these challenges.

But we had hoped Jesus would be the one to redeem Israel.

But things did not turn out as they expected. These disciples were hungry for a change. Ready for things to get better. And Jesus did not overthrow the Roman authorities as they wished. Plus, the women say He is alive, but they cannot believe it. Cleopas and his friend are confused and distraught.

I appreciate what the two followers of Jesus do for us this Easter morning.

They do not let us skip straight to singing alleluias, will they?

It is Easter afternoon, and they are not sure what is really going to happen. Cleopas and his friend remind us to not move on too quickly to a resolution. You know how it is. Sometimes we are uncomfortable with the doubts and disappointments, so we move quickly on.

A friend shares that he is struggling with depression, and we say, "Yes, but look how good you have it. You have a home, a family, a job." By saying thus we dismiss his anguish and a possible medical condition.

The couple tells us that they had a miscarriage, and we want to jump quickly to say, "I am sure you will have more children." That is not helpful.

Sometimes we are uncomfortable with loose ends, so we try to wrap things up neatly.

We do not linger long with loss and disappointment as a rule of thumb in our culture. But one thing this Holy week reminds us, is that before we get to the resurrection, there is a cross.

And before their hearts burned with hope, their hearts were broken.

Jesus listens and then he stops them. He opens the Scriptures to them, then shares Communion with them. It was then in the breaking of the bread that they recognized Jesus and their eyes were opened.

Listen again

"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;"

This is how we worship- through Word and sacrament praying that our hearts. They were slow of heart unable to grasp that Jesus was really there and alive. And then their eyes were open, and now they can see. The future is not dead. They can hope. New possibilities open up. The Resurrection of Jesus our Lord, makes that possible. God has made the impossible a possibility.

When our hearts are broken, we pray that we might meet Jesus that Jesus will show up.

But Cleopas and friend remind us that we are the ones that have to be open. And sometimes Jesus comes in the guise of the stranger.

There was real hospitality. Real hospitality means more than being friendly. Hospitality means inviting someone into your life.

They did not invite Jesus to stay because they wanted to build a business relationship or it might boost their social status. They invited Jesus because it was getting late, and they knew he must be hungry. They invited him out of care for him, not out of gain for themselves.

It was the two travelers who opened themselves up to Jesus, a stranger. They took initiative to invite Jesus to stay for supper.

It was the conversation around the table that allowed Jesus to tell them what happened, that resurrection happened.

In the visiting, Jesus revealed himself.

Through the ordinary acts of walking and talking together that Jesus shows us.

The risen Jesus shows up the a couple of ordinary guys.

When we welcome the stranger and break bread, Christ is present.

Something holy happens in the ordinary sharing of lives around our common meals.

And it begins with this Table where Jesus offers himself to us to mend broken hearts, to makes us whole, and to grant us forgiveness and a fresh start.

We live increasingly isolated lives.

Some of us have hundreds of friends on Facebook or follow hundreds on Twitter, but have little time for real face to face friends.

With our hectic lives, just eating a meal with others might be counter cultural these days.

So here's an idea, Fort Hill Church.

Let's make a resolution to have Emmaus meals as a church as a way to practice resurrection. What if two people who know each other, reach out to one other person in the church or in their neighborhood?

It may be hard to do if you invite someone by yourself, so find a Cleopas, a friend and the two of you invite someone together.

That person or family may be new to our church.

He or she may be a single person who lives nearby.

An older couple might invite a child of the church. And then they start to become faith friends in the church family.

What if two people invited the other to coffee or lunch after church?

This is how the Christian community grows.

This is how the faith family is formed.

It begins with inviting the stranger, telling the story of what God is doing, and eating together, every meal a sign of God's grace in our lives.

What if we just listened to one another, offered encouragement, and ask a blessing?

It's just that simple.

In this Easter season and especially over the summer when people come and go more often, what if we spent time in this simple practice of Christian hospitality?

It's not a program. You can do it when it suits your schedule.

And while our buildings are renovated over summer, we can focus on building relationships, on building fellowship, in this way outside the church walls.

Set a goal to have one Emmaus meal a month for the next 6 months.

That is your Easter assignment. A way to respond to the good news!

Go home and discuss how you might reach out to a stranger in friendship.

And when you gather, expect Jesus to show up when you do.

God gives us companions along the way to share the journey.

The Emmaus road reminds us to expect God to show up. The tomb is empty. Jesus is set loose on the world. He has overcome death and the grave. And we do not have to be afraid!

The Emmaus meal reminds us that small gestures of friendship and hospitality are Christ-like acts.

Emmaus reminds us that when our hearts are broken, we can expect that Jesus himself is present with us.

We can hope again and begin again!

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ⁱ David Lose, "Broken Before Burning " Tuesday, April 29, 2014 at www.workingpreacher.org