

TEXT: Luke 24:13-35

¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?" ¹⁹ "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. ²² In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴ Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." ²⁵ He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. ²⁸ As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" ³³ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together ³⁴ and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." ³⁵ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread. - NIV

Prayer of the Day:

O God by the humiliation of your son you lifted up this fallen world from the despair of death. By his resurrection to life, grant your faithful people gladness of heart and the hope of eternal joys; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen!

Verse of the Day:

Alleluia. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. Our hearts were burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us. Alleluia. (Luke 24:32 cf. NIV)

Sermon Text:

The appearance of Jesus to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, it is one of those well-known lessons of Scripture. Likely heard multiple times in Sunday School, included in the yearly pericope. Our synod has even spent dollars to turn it into a movie. You can check it out of the library should you not have your own copy of it at home. It's so well known that it has become like the well-traveled road upon which those disciples were traveling. They had walked it so many times over their lives that their feet simply carried them as they discussed everything that had happened.

That was a well-known road too, even if not so very familiar. The events had seared themselves into the brain and they were still fresh. They are walking the road on Easter morning. That's when we see yet another appearance of the risen Christ. Our lesson told us,

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They knew the events. They could recount the truth. But what any of this meant ... that is what they were discussing as they walked along the familiar road from Emmaus to Jerusalem. Notice Jesus' reaction to that!

²⁵ He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

It is easy for us to immediately chastize those disciples. I mean this is Luke chapter 24, pretty much near the end of an account that encapsulates 3 years of ministry as Jesus walked familiar roads with them and taught them about everything that was going to occur. God Himself had walked and talked with them, weren't they listening? Oh, how I have yearned for the experience they had. Foolish and slow of heart? I have other words for them. What a wasted opportunity.

It is easy for us to chastise these disciples but then they walk a familiar road, not just for them but for me. No, I have never set foot in Israel but my feet regularly walk the wasteland of this wicked world which seeks to erase the teachings of God which have been with me since my youth, taught at home, in Sunday School, each week in worship. No, I have never actually heard the voice of Jesus as He walked with me down the streets of North Fond du Lac but He has spent far longer than three years preparing me, and educating me, to go out with the Word He has given. Oh, I even have what I think is a pretty good grasp on the facts and the figures of it all. Whether at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, WLA, or in Sunday School and Bibles Study, our educational system is renowned as a gem that equips our people far better than many other church bodies do. Yet, how often don't we find ourselves traveling through life, distracted by the events of the world

around us? Wondering where God is in all of this? Dare I say even wondering if this Jesus whom we know so well really is everything we thought He was.

They still don't see Him for who He is having been kept from that truth.

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This section causes all kinds of ink spillage. Some say this is the Lord's Supper, some say it is only a meal. I don't know that it matters as Jesus never completes the act. But I personally don't know how I'm not supposed to be reminded of that night in the upper room when I hear the words. It seems to make perfect sense that the same would be true of the disciples whose eyes are opened as Jesus does what must have been so very familiar for them: the feeding of the 4000, the feeding of the 5000, the countless meals shared, that fateful night in the upper room from which they were only 3 days removed. And then ... gone. Jesus vanishes.

Ever wonder why? This lesson is weird in that they were kept from recognizing Him and when they do, He vanishes like some apparition. Here in lies the answer to all the times we find ourselves on the familiar roads of confusion and grief, disillusioned by a world that leaves us wondering what the point of it all is. Oh, how I have yearned to walk with Jesus in those moments. Oh, how I have wished on so many occasions that I could actually put Jesus in this pulpit for you all to hear and listen too, for me to hear and listen to that we might receive the comfort and peace which only He can bring.

But then notice so often after the resurrection, how Jesus wishes to encounter His disciples. He does so through the means of grace, the Gospel in Word and in Sacraments. He comes to the disciples but not with this miraculous appearance and saying, "hey, knock it off! Here I am!!" He comes and urges them to recount all of those facts and figures of the Scripture. He opens their hearts and minds to understand all that those real events mean for them.

So He comes to you. He comes in water connected to that same Word washing away our sin and doubt even as He sends His Spirit into our hearts and connects us to Himself and all He has done for us. He sends us parents and teachers, pastors or preachers, who open the Scripture for us reminding us not only of facts and figures but of the meaning these things possess. Dare I say it, He comes to us as He breaks bread and pours wine, opening our eyes to the miracle that takes place before us as they somehow are at the same time His body, His blood that we might touch and see, that faith might be strengthened, that we might believe in the forgiveness He alone provides, and in it find the strength to carry on in a world in which the fight against sin is all too real as we hold out His Word and the hope of the glory to come when one day He returns for all to see, that every knee might bow, that we might be with body and soul for all eternity.

The disciples on the road to Emmaus. The history is as familiar as the road they travel as they encounter their Savior and their faith is strengthened. Dear friends as we travel our roads in this life, as we come face to face with those familiar joys and sorrows, in confusion or comfort. May we find Jesus, exactly where He told us He would be ... as unexpected as that might be. Amen.