

King of Glory Lutheran Church
April 25/26, 2020
Year A: Easter 3: Luke 24:13-35
Rev. Debra Abbott

Luke 24:13-35

13 Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14 and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, 16 but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. 17 And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. 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?" 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, 20 and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 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. 22 Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 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 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." 25 Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! 26 Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" 27 Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. 28 As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. 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. 30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. 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?" 33 That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. 34 They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" 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.

The Bible is filled with stories of people on the road.

Roads going towards a new place. Roads that people run on to escape. Roads that are rocky and hard to follow. Roads that are exciting to set out on. Roads where danger is around the next corner.

I bet that you can think of all kinds of roads you have been on in your life. Roads that might be similar to some of those we find in the Bible.

Today we hear the story of two people traveling on the road to Emmaus. We meet these two, Cleopas and his friend, on this road, anxious to leave behind all that has happened in Jerusalem. With the city of Jerusalem behind them and Emmaus a few miles in the distance they have time to talk with each other about the past few days.

Things had not gone the way they had thought they would. Jesus had been condemned to death and crucified. Jesus, the one they had watched and experienced healing, forgiving, teaching, and preaching. They thought they knew Jesus, but now they know only that he is dead.

As they talk of all this - their sadness, their loss, their blown expectations - Jesus comes to them on the road. But they don't know it. They don't recognize him. They certainly didn't expect to meet him on the road that day. And yet, there he is.

Jesus comes up and asks them what they are talking about. They tell Jesus the story of the past few days and out of their sadness they speak of what they have lost. "We had hoped that he was the one who would redeem Israel." We had hoped this Jesus was the one who would save us and change everything.

"We had hoped..." These are heartbreaking words. How many times have you heard someone say this to you or thought it for yourself.

I had hoped he would have been a more loyal friend. I had hoped I would have gotten a better grade, or that job I wanted. I had hoped that she wouldn't die. I had hoped that things would be different.

And now of course there are all kinds of things we had hoped that will not happen during this time of pandemic and quarantine. I could go on and on with the list of all the things I know you had hoped for that will not happen or will not be the same.

We all have hopes and dreams and expectations for how we think our week or year or life should go. Sometimes what we hope for happens. Sometimes it doesn't.

It's not hard to imagine the emotions and thoughts of those two on the road that day because it's a road we've been on before. The road we walk when we are heartbroken, devastated, or disappointed.

And when we find ourselves on that kind of road, that time in life when we are faced with disappointment and heartbreak, it is hard to see anything else. Consumed with grief or fear or anger our vision isn't clear and it can feel like we are on the road all alone. Not even able to look around or recognize Jesus on the road with us.

Cleopas and his friend didn't expect to see Jesus. And they didn't recognize him right away. Jesus didn't appear before them by waving his arms and yelling, I'm back! No, instead he joins them on the road, and listens to their grief and confusion and disappointment. He walks with them all the way to Emmaus and along the way reminds them that God is at work even in suffering and death.

And when they arrived at the place they were staying there in Emmaus, the two invited Jesus to stay with them. And so they go in together as the sun goes down and the night grows dark. And in this place they gather around a table and share a meal.

And suddenly there is a shift. The two friends invited the stranger in and welcomed him... but at the table it is the stranger, Jesus, who becomes the host. He took bread, blessed and broke it and gave it to them.

Then, for the first time they recognized him. They saw Jesus right in front of them.

It shouldn't surprise us at all that Jesus appears to his two followers on the road and then at the table, offering a blessing and breaking bread. Because God reveals God's self in the most ordinary and familiar moments. On the roads we travel and the tables we gather around.

There are times when Jesus is mysterious and confusing and even unknown to us, maybe that's most of the time. But then there are times when Jesus is familiar and recognizable, and we are amazed when we realize that he was with us all along.

When the disciples' eyes are opened they recognize Jesus and know that he has risen from the dead. They look back over the last few hours and know that Jesus was with them all along. "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

They are so excited, so energized that they leave Emmaus and go back to Jerusalem, back to their community. They run down the road they had just taken. But now that road seems very different. The women's story at the tomb is now theirs as well – they can announce, "We have seen the Lord, He is risen! "

In this Easter season we celebrate Jesus' resurrection and we hear stories of Jesus' appearances in locked rooms and open roads, around tables and campfires. We have been given these stories that we might know that Jesus lives, then and now, and comes to us when we least expect to see him.

On all the roads we travel Jesus continues to appear to you and to me today. He meets us - sometimes as a stranger and sometimes as a familiar friend. Jesus meets us in holy conversations, in lost hopes, in ordinary moments and in ways that surprise us. Jesus meets us and walks with us that we might know we are never alone in grief or in joy.

As we see him on the road today, Jesus reminds us that he doesn't stand still, he travels down many roads, appearing in surprising ways.

Now maybe right now you are thinking, I would love to get out on any kind of road but I can't! Right now we are restricted in our movements and when we are out we are confined behind a mask. We aren't able to live life the way we want to today.

And yet, the good news of Jesus who is alive and with us can still be shared and must be shared. When you offer comfort as you listen to a friend you are sharing the good news of Jesus' presence. When we sew masks, donate money to the ELCA COVID 19 Response Fund, or make cards of encouragement and thanks for health care workers we are sharing the good news of Jesus' love. When we pray for help and give thanks we are sharing in the hope Jesus gives.

On all the roads you find yourself on in life, the roads you choose and roads you don't, Jesus is walking with you. Keep your eyes open for Jesus. Watch for him. Walk with him. And share the good news he brings. Blessings to you on the roads you travel! Amen.