Do You See Him?

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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.

1. Last Week's Gathering

Last Monday through Thursday I attended an annual gathering of Korean UMC pastors and lay people in Paramus, New Jersey. This year's theme was

"Discovering the seeds of hope: KUMC rooted in the Gospel." This year's gathering was quite different from past years' gatherings. We focused on the past, the present, and the future of the Korean UMC and the UMC. It was an opportunity for me to learn more about where we are now and where we are going. I learned that the future of the UMC is unclear and uncertain. When I left New Jersey for home in MA, somehow I was discouraged.

While I was driving to come back home, I listened to a sermon CD. The preacher was from Korea preaching at a revival service in Chicago. He said that the attitude of Korean-Americans living in Chicago was very negative about the church. They did not have hope of their churches. He pointed out that such an attitude about their church should be changed. He said that they should see the resurrected Jesus among them. We notice that the two disciples of Jesus in today's scripture are also hopeless.

2. Two Disciples' Eyes were Opened

It is later on Easter Day, two of Jesus' followers walk to Emmaus. Verse 21 says, "***We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel***." They had lived in hope, but they no longer have that hope. They are hopeless and despaired and so they are going back to their hometown. While they walk, the disciples talk about the day's startling news, the death of Jesus on the cross. As they walk, a stranger walks beside them. The author of Luke's gospel tells us the stranger is Jesus. The two disciples do not recognize him. One of the two is Cleopas. According to Eusebius, the first church historian, Cleopas was a relative of Jesus. Yet it is interesting that the two men don't recognize Jesus. They might have been pre-occupied with being frustrated or disappointed in the things that had happened the days before.

Jesus asks the disciples what they are discussing. Cleopas says to Jesus, ***"Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?"*** (verse 18) Jesus asks, "what things?" They answer, "about Jesus of Nazareth." They say Jesus was one of the prophets who was powerful in word and deed. But Jesus was arrested and crucified.

The men share with Jesus what they heard from other people. Some women reported the resurrection of Jesus. The eleven disciples considered the women's experience, "a vision" (v. 23). The two kept saying, "***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***."

The two disciples on the road heard about the resurrection of Jesus, but weren't sure if Jesus had indeed risen from the grave. Jesus tells them how foolish and slow they are to grasp the Old Testament prophecies and how they are fulfilled in Christ. Jesus reminds them that it was God's plan that Jesus was crucified and ascended to be with God.

3. The Breaking of the Bread

When the two disciples come near Emmaus, Jesus appears to be planning to go further. The men beg Jesus, "***Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over***" (v. 29). Jesus goes into the house to stay with them. After Jesus sits down to eat, he takes some bread. He blesses it and breaks it. Then he gives it to the two disciples. Immediately the men recognize who the stranger is, and Jesus disappears. The meal they shared mimics the Holy Communion.

After Jesus is gone the two disciples say 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?***" (v. 32) The hearts of the disciples were burning when Jesus talked about what the Old Testament says. The two disciples realize that Jesus has risen and walked with them. According to Luke's Gospel, after Jesus was risen he appeared to the two disciples for the first time. Jesus knew that the two disciples are so depressed by his crucifixion. Now for the two disciples the resurrection of Jesus became a reality when they heard Jesus' interpretation of "all the scriptures" (v. 27) and the "breaking of the bread" (v. 35).

This passage tells us of how Christ is made known through the preaching of Jesus and the celebration of the Holy Communion. For the two disciples, "their eyes were opened" (v. 31) when they had the communion with the risen Jesus. As we grow older, our physical eyesight likely changes. But even as our physical eyesight may fade, our spiritual eyesight can improve over time.

4. Do We See the Risen Jesus?

The question we ask ourselves today is, "do we see the risen Jesus among us?" We know the risen Jesus was with his disciples a long time ago, but what about now? Jesus is always around us, but why can't we see him among us? It may be because our eyes of faith are closed to what is happening around us.

Look at the Israelites in Exodus 14:11-12. They complain to Moses, "***Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? 12 Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, "Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians"? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness***."

Why do the people complain to Moses? It is because they do not see the presence of the Lord among them. Exodus 13:21 says, "***The LORD went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night***." Verse 22 says, "***Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people***." I am sure that God knew what he was doing but the Israelites can't see the presence of the Lord in front of

them. When we say we are Christians, we are saying that we believe in the resurrection of Jesus and God is in our presence in our daily lives because of the risen Christ. We can't see God with our physical eyes, but we see him with the eyes of our hearts and spirits.

5. Living with Passion

When the two disciples see the risen Christ, what do they do? Verse 33 & 35 says, "***That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together***….[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***." As soon as the two disciples confirm the resurrection of Jesus, they get right up and return to Jerusalem. They walked seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They would have been tired, and it was late in the evening. But the disciples can't wait to tell the other disciples in Jerusalem that Jesus has risen and walked with them. They are filled with passion to share the good news of the resurrection of Jesus.

6. Conclusion

There is a saying, "If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together." In the context of today's message, I would like to add one more part to this phrase; "If you want to go with passion and excitement, go with Jesus." The story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus highlights to use the process of transformation that we all experience when we encounter Jesus. Before they see the risen Christ they were without hope and discouraged. But after their eyes were opened, they were filled with passion and excitement. They couldn't sleep but returned the 7 miles back to Jerusalem right away to share the good news of the risen Jesus.

7. Application

Do we worry about the future of ourselves, the UMC, and our church? If we do, we are like the two disciples of Jesus who were hopeless before they see the risen Christ. Our future is in God's hand. What we need to do is to get excited about sharing the gospel of the risen Jesus. If we want to get excited, we need to see the risen Jesus first. If we think we can see him right now, we praise the Lord. If not, I pray that the Lord touches our eyes so that we can see the risen Jesus as we sing the song, "He touched Me." "Shackled by a heavy burden, 'Neath a load of guilt and shame. Then the hand of Jesus touched me, And now I am no longer the same. He touched me, Oh He touched me, And oh the joy that floods my soul! Something happened and now I know, He touched me and made me whole. Since I met this blessed Savior, Since He cleansed and made me whole, I will never cease to praise Him, I'll shout it while eternity rolls. He touched me, Oh He touched me, And oh the joy that floods my soul! Something happened and now I know, He touched me and made me whole." Amen.