

“Walk with Us” (Luke 24:13-35) – Apr. 14, 2024

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter

Some of you might have experienced a moment when the Spirit of God came upon you in a powerful way. For some, it happened on a retreat as a youth, a Sunday worship, or in a spiritual direction meeting. Some have felt the Spirit of God being present while praying loudly or silently in a church, in a room, or from the mountaintop. Others had such a special, extraordinary experience while standing on a beach, walking down a busy street, or quietly and slowly walking through the labyrinth. Whatever the circumstances, these moments can be life-changing.

In early 1738, John Wesley was at a low point, having just returned from his disappointing missionary efforts in Savannah, Georgia. By the way, Wesley was founder of the Methodist movement. On the evening of May 24<sup>th</sup>, he reluctantly attended a group meeting on Aldersgate Street in London. During the meeting, when he heard a reading from Luther's preface to Romans, he felt his “heart strangely warmed.” Wesley wrote about his deep spiritual experience in his journal on the same night: “I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.” Wesley’s eye-opening Holy Spirit moment is often called his “Aldersgate experience.”<sup>1</sup>

Emmaus' story is one of the first stories about a life-transforming encounter with the risen Christ in the Bible. Two of Jesus’ disciples were going back home to Emmaus. One of them was named Cleopas and the other was unnamed. Probably, Luke didn’t reveal the name and gender of Cleopas’ companion in order to invite every reader to journey together as Cleopas’ companion. This morning, I also invite you to walk with Cleopas.

Deeply saddened and frustrated, they were not able to recognize him when Jesus walked by their side. Jesus asked them, “What are you discussing with each other?” Cleopas and the other disciple stopped and replied, “You haven’t heard the things about Jesus of Nazareth? He was crucified and some female disciples shared some astonishing and confusing news. They were at the tomb early this morning and couldn’t find Jesus’ body. They told us that they had seen a vision of

---

<sup>1</sup> UM Resource.

angels who said he was alive. Some of us also went to the tomb and couldn't find his body.”

Then Jesus said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are. So slow-hearted to believe!” Jesus went on to explain that his suffering, resurrection, and entry into glory was the fulfillment to which all Scripture points. We don't know how Cleopas and his companion responded to this stranger's rebuke. One thing for sure: The Gospel of Luke is clearly communicating that every Jesus moment, including Easter, is the fulfillment of the Scriptures.

As they approached Emmaus village, Jesus acted as if he were going to continue on, but they urged him strongly, “Stay and have supper with us. It's nearly evening; the day is done.” So he went in to stay with them. And here is what happened: He sat down at the table with them. Taking the bread, he blessed (gave thanks) and broke it, and gave it to them. Do you see Jesus, the guest, acting like the host? This is exactly what Jesus did during the Last Supper, too. “Took the bread. gave thanks to God, broke the bread, and gave it to his disciples.”

At that moment, the eyes of two disciples were opened and they recognized him. And then Jesus disappeared from their sight. Cleopas and the other disciple said to each other, “Didn't we feel on fire as he conversed with us on the road, as he opened up the Scriptures for us?” This response became a great “Yes” for them to live anew as Easter people.<sup>2</sup> These two disciples, who had been hopeless, aimless, and full of sadness, got up and hastily returned to Jerusalem full of joy and hope. What a difference between their going to Emmaus and their return to Jerusalem!

When they arrived in Jerusalem, they found the eleven and their friends gathered together. Before they shared the appearance of Jesus on their journey to Emmaus, the others told them, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon.” The two also went over everything that happened and how they recognized him when he broke the bread.

This is not a story far away; we are in that story right now. The United Methodist Book of Worship explains that the basic pattern of worship is (1) Entrance that begins with gathering; (2) Proclamation and Response that includes Scripture reading, sermon, and offering; (3) Thanksgiving and Communion, or simply Thanksgiving (without Holy Communion); (4) Sending Forth. Whenever we

---

<sup>2</sup> Nouwen, *With Burning Heart*.

worship together, we encounter the living God through the risen Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In our worship, the Spirit is free to move us to worship in diverse ways and at the same time invites us to celebrate our own Emmaus journey with the risen Christ in and through worship. The Book of Worship concludes that “as Jesus disappeared and sent the disciples into the world with faith and joy, so he sends us forth into the world. And as those disciples found Christ when they arrived in Jerusalem later that evening, so we can find Christ with us wherever we go.”

As Easter people, we are called to return to the world, living out and sharing the Easter hope and faith. The risen Christ will continue to walk with us, stay with us, and eat with us. In our worship and ongoing faith journey, we will find our hearts “strangely warmed,” and recognize the risen Christ in “the breaking of the bread” at our own tables and beyond. Through his invisible visibility, the risen Christ spoke and still speaks, telling us that “Easter is not over. It stretches into the rest of our lives.”<sup>3</sup>

We are not perfect. We are broken just like the disciples of Jesus back then. They found out that their brokenness could become a source of new beginnings in the hands of the risen Christ. They found that they were the beloved in God's eyes. Why not us? As Henri Nouwen said, “Brokenness is a reality of our existence, and as we befriend it and place it under the blessing, we will discover how much we have to give—much more than we may ever have dreamed.”<sup>4</sup>

We often walk with our broken selves, whether because of fear, weariness, or uncertainty. Whether because of physical, emotional, relational, financial, social, or spiritual challenges. We sometimes feel like broken pieces. I like Nouwen's invitation for us to go deeper into our spiritual well, asking ourselves whether we want to be known by Jesus: “Do we want him to walk freely into every room of our inner lives? Do we want him to see our bad side as well as our good, our shadow as well as our light? Or do we prefer him to go on without entering our home? In the end, the question is: ‘Do we really trust him and entrust every part of ourselves to him?’”<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> *Life of the Beloved*.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

The Good news is that the risen Christ loves us, always comes to us, walks with us, sometimes visible, some other times invisible. Let us invite Jesus to become a host who takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to us and to the world. The host anoints us with the healing balm. And strengthens us with Easter hope, making our hearts “strangely warmed.” This Jesus, the risen Christ, stretches out his hand to us even at this very moment and says: “Shall we walk together?” And all God’s people say, “Amen!”