

**Recognizing Jesus**  
**Luke 24:13-35**  
**April 30, 2017 – The Third Sunday of Easter**

Two disciples are traveling from Jerusalem to Emmaus, walking along the road discussing everything that had recently happened. Suddenly a third traveler joined them and asked a very typical question: “What are you talking about?” Cleopas responds, “What do you mean, ‘What are we talking about?’ Don’t you know? Some amazing things have happened. There was this fellow – Jesus from Nazareth. He did some amazing things – healed the blind and the lame. But more than that, he gave us some wonderful words. He showed us a new way of living, of sharing God’s love, of meeting violence with peace; and he taught us about a new kingdom – the kingdom of God on earth. Boy, we had high hopes. But, all of the sudden our leaders turned against him, they turned him over to Roman authorities, and he was crucified. But there’s more. Some women reported seeing angels at his tomb – an empty tomb; and they were told he is alive; and some of his followers also went to the tomb, and they tell a similar story.”

The stranger, the one who joined Cleopas and the other disciple, said, “You just don’t understand, do you?” Then he began to teach them. He began to interpret scripture, to explain the true meaning of the law of Moses and the oracles of all the prophets. He began to teach them – all these writings, all these ancient books – they are really all about God’s love. God created the world, and called it good. God blessed the first humans, and God seeks to continue that blessing.” And he asked them, “Was it not necessary for the Messiah to come, the ultimate expression of God’s love? Indeed, the life, the death, and the resurrection of the Messiah proves God’s love. And because the Messiah lives, that love will never die.”

By now, they had gotten to Emmaus, and while the stranger seemed to be going further, Cleopas and the other disciple urged him to stay. They had developed a relationship; they had learned so much; they had made a new friend. . “Come,” they said. “It’s almost sundown. Have dinner with us.” And so, he went inside with them and took a seat at the table. When he was seated with them at the dinner table, he took bread, blessed it, broke it, and give it to them, and suddenly their eyes were opened, and they recognized that the one with whom they had been walking was none other than the risen Christ.

And so I ask, “Where are you in this story? Where am I in this story?” Like much of scripture, I love the story of the walk to Emmaus. The first thing we notice is that the second disciple is never named. There were two disciples walking along the road. One was named Cleopas; but who was the other one? I don’t think that’s an accident. No, I think that Luke, the Gospel writer, is saying, “You, my reader, you, my hearer, you can be that other disciple.” Indeed, I like to think that, in a symbolic, but very wonderful way, Luke is saying that we are also

the ones walking that road, making that journey from our respective “Jerusalem temples” to our homes.

And, as I have repeatedly emphasized, Jesus is walking with us. Jesus is always walking with us. But how often do we not recognize Jesus, or forget he is with us; or, we totally ignore him. Yes, friends, Jesus is with us always; the Spirit of the Risen Christ is with us always.” So what? So what’s the point of this “risen Christ” with us.

Luke tells us, the first role of that Spirit with us is to teach us. To explain the scriptures to us. Now, in the time of Jesus, the scriptures included: the five books of Moses – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy; the writing of the prophets; and some other ancient Jewish writings. In our time, thanks to Luke, and Matthew and Mark, and John, and Paul, and a few other followers, we have the Gospels and the Letters – truly the teachings of Jesus.

And what do those scriptures tell us, all the scriptures of the Old and New Testament? What does the risen Christ want us to know? The story of God’s amazing love. That’s the bottom line: God loves the world and every person in the world; and God loves each of us so much as to take on human form, to live with us, to teach us, to heal us, to die for us, to rise again for us; and yes, to walk with us always. God in Christ wants us to experience that love.

So, after the teaching, we have the experience. . . The risen Christ sat down at the table with the two disciples, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them; and their eyes were open and they recognized him. Friends, we experience the love of God in a multitude of ways. John Wesley called them “the means of Grace”; and he divided them into works of mercy and works of piety. Works of piety include worship and prayer, bible study and fasting, meditation and song, and perhaps most of all sacrament. We experience the amazing love of God every time we take communion – the breaking of the bread of heaven.

So they learned of God’s love; then they experienced God’s love. Then what happened? Luke tells us they got up right then, that very evening, and returned to Jerusalem to share the Good News with the other disciples, the eleven and their companions. And, yes, I believe that, once we experience that love, we too are called to share that love; and those are the works of mercy: feeding the hungry, housing the homeless; clothing the naked; visiting the sick and imprisoned, helping wherever help is needed in the name of the risen Christ. Sometimes that sharing happens in big ways; and sometimes it’s as simple as a smile, a friendly “hello,” a kind word, a cheerful note. It’s all about the love of God.

And so, in these 23 verses – the story of the Walk to Emmaus, we have the entire story of Christian discipleship. Whether we recognize him or not, Christ is walking with us. Christ is always walking with us. And in the presence of Christ with us, we first learn of the Good News of God’s Amazing Love; we then experience the Good News of God’s Amazing Love; and finally we share the Good

News of God's Amazing Love. It's the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It's the best news in the world.

Thanks be to God for the presence of the risen Christ; the greatest gift in the world.

Let us pray. . .

Holy Lord,

Make us ever mindful that you are always with us,  
walking beside us.

Open our hearts that we might learn your ways,  
experience your love,  
and share your love with all whom we meet.

This we pray in your holy name.

Amen.

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