

Luke 24:13-35

Now on that same day two of Jesus' disciples were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. 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?" 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, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 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. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 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. 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." Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. 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. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. 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?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Remember Good Friday? It seems now like it is a distant memory. After all, for us it was just a little over two weeks ago, over two Sundays ago. However, that is not the way it was for the two people in our gospel passage this morning. For them it had just happened. It was fresh in their minds and in their hearts. They were just into their third day. And in those three

days, everything they had dedicated themselves to had come to an end. At least that is the way it appeared. Jesus had been arrested right in front of them in the garden where they were staying. They tried him, if you want to call it a trial. They condemned him, and they beat him, and they killed him. They stayed in Jerusalem over the Sabbath, more out of shock than devotion, and now they were on their way home.

And now, walking down that well-traveled road between Jerusalem and Emmaus, the words finally started coming. They hoped the answers would, too. They talked about the arrest. They talked about the trial and the actions of the Chief Priest. They talked about how so many people called out for Jesus to be crucified, less than a week after they had gathered at the gate to the city calling out, "Hosanna!" They talked about what a miserable day Saturday had been, hanging out with their fellow disciples with a million questions and no answers.

And they talked about how that very morning, as they were getting ready to head home, some of the women who had gone to complete the burial process by applying spices to the body, to Jesus' body, had found the tomb empty. How they said that there were angels there, angels that asked them why they were looking for the dead when the man they were looking for had been raised. And they talked about how some others went to the tomb and also found it empty just like the women said.

All this was taking place Sunday afternoon, as Cleopas and another disciple, who had left the others, were making their way home to Emmaus. And as they did, a man shows up and walks with them.

Well, you heard the story. You know the story. The man that showed up was Jesus, but he wasn't recognized. Somehow, his true identity was blocked from Cleopas and his friend. As they walked, he asked them what it was that they were talking about that seemed so important. Probably something like, "So, something happened in Jerusalem over the weekend, you say? Really? What kind of thing?" And in response to this guy's apparent cluelessness, they went through the whole story again with their exasperation and in their sorrow. At the end of their review, they brought their recollection to a close by saying, "We had hoped that he was the one. We hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel."

And that is where Jesus took over the conversation. He starts at the beginning and he opens everything up for them. He tells them about the prophets, which they probably knew fairly well, but this time he explains things in a new light. He explains things in the light of the crucifixion...and the resurrection. I'm sure that, as he did, they were nodding their head, saying things like, "Yeah, that does make sense. Of course, I never thought of it that way before."

On and on they walked throughout the afternoon, and on and on this stranger went covering every detail as to why things had to be as they had been. He laid out the plan, he laid out God's plan, from start to finish. He explained to them that there was really no other way for humanity to be re-united with God.

As evening drew close, they reached their destination, but they hadn't had enough. They wanted to hear more. This was too great. This was so exciting. So, no longer with sorrow, but with joy, they invited this stranger for dinner and there they finally saw who they had been

walking with, who they had been listening so intently to. You see, there was a purpose for all the review. It put everything into a proper perspective. It focused them on a new reality. It readied them for what they needed to understand, what they needed to see. And then, in the end, at that table; they finally were able, they finally became equipped, by understanding *their* story in the light of the resurrection, to see Jesus. How did the passage say it? Their eyes were opened. They had their eyes opened to see the real Jesus. The Risen Jesus. The Savior Jesus.

Peter says this in Acts, "Let the entire House of Israel know WITH CERTAINTY that God has made Him both Lord and Messiah..." God has made Jesus the Savior of the world within his plan of salvation and we can know that *with certainty*. We can know that Good Friday and Easter had been in the works for hundreds, or thousands, of years; maybe for all time. With God directing, we can know that Abraham started the process, Moses set the stage, and the prophets spoke God heart about it and about what would come.

We can know this because our faith is a historical faith. What I mean is that our faith has a history and it is contained within history. It has a plan and it has been laid out for us. It has been lived out within us. God brought it to be within us. And that plan has a final answer and that answer became clear through an empty tomb.

It has been laid out for us to see, and I think that that was God's plan all along. God was not just delivering to us a philosophy of "what-ifs" for us to consider and debate. He was fixing our problem, a problem we created, and, through that, he was showing us what life is really all about.

And he did it within our lives. It is a chronicle of what had been and a promise of what will be. It is historical. Names are named. Times are given. Cities are referenced. It is like God saying to us, "Pay attention! Pay attention, because I know that you are going to want to check this all out." I am doing something among you that will make all thing right again. That will make all things new again.

On that road from Jerusalem to Emmaus that day, Jesus gave a history lesson. He gave them, and gives us, a history lesson of our failures and our successes. He reviewed for them, and he reviews for us, our willfulness... and the times of our faithfulness. Then he showed us, in the flesh, the solution.

It is like a math problem where the crucifixion and the resurrection was the answer and that day on the road Jesus did what every math teacher has asks of us for all of time. He showed them his work. He showed them his work, so they could understand how the answer makes sense and how it came to be. And their eyes were opened that day and they, for the first time, saw the risen Christ.

And here is the thing for us to take away today. Jesus is walking our roads, too. Christ is walking each of our roads today, and he wants to show us his work, if we will listen. He wants to show us his work so that all of us can see the Risen Christ, and, through that, know with certainty our answer for life.

Amen