

WALK, TALK AND PRAY



Scripture:

Psalms 116:1-4, 12-19

¹I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my supplications. ²Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live. ³The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish. ⁴Then I called on the name of the LORD: “O LORD, I pray, save my life!”

¹²What shall I return to the LORD for all his bounty to me? ¹³I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD, ¹⁴I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people. ¹⁵Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful ones. ¹⁶O LORD, I am your servant; I am your servant, the child of your serving girl. You have loosed my bonds. ¹⁷I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice and call on the name of the LORD. ¹⁸I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people, ¹⁹in the courts of the house of the LORD, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the LORD!

Luke 24:13-35

¹³Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then 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?” ¹⁹He 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, ²⁰and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹But 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. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and 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. ²⁴Some 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.” ²⁵Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹But 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. ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They 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?” ³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the

eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



WALK, TALK AND PRAY

(A video, The Road to Emmaus, was shown to the congregation.)

Let’s walk through this passage together and get an idea of the lesson God wants us to learn from this Walk to Emmaus event that happened the same day Jesus had risen. What questions might you have about this story now that you have seen it on the video?

I always have questions in my head. Two that came to mind first were:

- Who is Cleopas? (since he is not named among the original twelve disciples.)
- And why are they going to Emmaus? What’s in Emmaus that they are in a hurry to see the same day Christ’s tomb was found empty?

Now the passage begins with: “Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.”

WHO ARE THESE TWO?

So who exactly are these two? There is some speculation. (See the picture on page one and remember the video; both assumed that the two disciples were men. The painting on page one also assumes there is a servant boy and a dog in the scene.) The Bible scholars who delve deeply into these kinds of questions found that, according to Wikipedia: “The historian, Eusebius of Caesarea, quotes the earlier chronicler, Hegesippus, who wrote, in the year AD 180, that he had interviewed the grandsons of Jude the Apostle and learned that Cleopas was the brother of Joseph, husband of the Virgin Mary!!” Fascinating finding isn’t it? So this might explain why it was so important to Jesus to appear to this couple. This was his non-biological Uncle Cleopas, Joseph’s brother.

And the other unnamed disciple? Biblical historians believe it was Christ’s Aunt Mary. Mary the wife of Cleopas is identified in the book of John 19, verse 25 where it reads: “Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and Mary

Magdalene.” Actually it was Mother Mary’s sister-in-law.

Jesus’ Aunt Mary was one of the women who went to Christ’s tomb and found it empty. This puts her in Jerusalem at the same time as her husband, Cleopas. It makes sense then that she would be with him on the road back to Emmaus, because that is where they lived.

This fascinating information is like a Forensic Files television story, isn’t it?

I love finding evidence of things that you can use to piece together the puzzle of what really happened during this crisis time in the life of the disciples!

CLEOPAS AND MARY

Reading a study by Dr. James Boice was helpful. He was once the senior minister of the Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia years ago and now has a radio broadcast called the “*Bible Study Hour*.” This radio show has been on the radio forever. My mother used to listen to it when I was small. In his broadcast called “*The Way to Emmaus*,” he says that even though Mary, wife of Cleopas was at the tomb with Mary Magdalene, when they discovered Jesus was not there, she still joined her husband to flee Jerusalem because he was too frightened to stay and see what was going to happen next. They had not yet heard about Jesus appearing to Mary Magdalene in the garden. When Cleopas’ wife returned from the empty tomb they packed up and fled.

Now why didn’t this story in Luke mention that it was Cleopas and his wife on the road to Emmaus? Her name was not important in that era and culture. Those who understand the effects of the extreme patriarchal society that existed when the Bible was written are not surprised that the woman in this pair of disciples was not named. She would not have been considered as important as Cleopas in the

mind of the person who shared this story with Luke. Yet they knew that Cleopas lived in Emmaus. So it makes sense that he and his wife would be going back there together after the Crucifixion of their nephew, Jesus.

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

The story goes on to say, “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?”

Jesus is so sly isn't he? My nephew, Kirk, would do something like this. Jesus pretends to not know anything to find out what they understand about what really happened earlier that same day.

The Bible says: “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?”

And Jesus replies: “What things?”

So Cleopas proceeds to tell Jesus what happened and how disappointed they were with the crucifixion. They hoped Jesus would be the Messiah who freed the Jews from oppression by the Roman Empire. They probably thought Christ's body had just been stolen.

But Jesus straightened them out and ²⁵said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.”

Now at this point, they still don't realize this is Jesus. The last time they saw Jesus he was emaciated and bloody on the cross. But they must have a feeling they can learn more from this very smart man. So Luke writes: ²⁸As they came near the village (Emmaus) to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going onward. (Jesus is a good actor here pretending to go on without them in the dark.)

²⁹But 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.

It was important to Jesus that this couple knew he had risen. Not only because they were his relatives and disciples, but because they started out on this walk very heartbroken, feeling lost and confused. This is what Jesus does. He shows up for the brokenhearted.

The passage says: ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

³²They 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?”

³³That same hour they got up and ran back to Jerusalem (seven miles); and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon Peter!” ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

JESUS SETS HIS DISCIPLES BACK ON COURSE

This road to Emmaus story is powerful! When I was on the tour of Israel, it was late at night and our bus was behind schedule. But when the tour guide announced that our bus was on the same road to Emmaus, our group asked the driver to stop so we could pick up a few stones on the side of the road that is now paved with asphalt. Stones let you go back in time. (Pastor Cindy handed out some of the stones to the congregation.)

This road to Emmaus story reminds us that many of us go off the path of faith during a crisis when we are scared and confused. It is easy to retreat and isolate away and let our fears keep us from feeling the presence of God even when Jesus is near.

In this story Jesus sets his disciples back on course by reminding them of the scriptures that they knew so well from their Jewish upbringing. Then he opened their eyes and their understanding about how he truly was the Messiah. They recognized him when he nurtured and shared a meal with them as he had done so many times before his crucifixion.

GOD IS WITH US

God doesn't always answer our prayers the way we ask or in the timing we hope for. But God is with us always helping the whole Universe flow towards harmony and goodness. Even if the slow work of God is so slow we can't see the light at the end of the tunnel of time, we are to trust that God is good and loves us all unconditionally.

The walk to Emmaus for Cleopas and his wife, Mary, started out in disbelief and sadness, but the road ended in joy, excitement, and love when they became aware that Jesus had been walking alongside them all along the way.

**Reverend Sarah Condon says it this way,
"We serve a good and gracious God who
does not abandon us when we are lost
and confused, but instead longs
to make his love for us clear."**

We show up to church with our own agendas. We are sometimes confused, sometimes exhausted, sometimes full of doubt waiting for some magic to happen, yet always hoping our connection to God will somehow be enhanced by taking this time and space to be here. (I believe that God appreciates your presence here.)

Open your eyes to the presence of Jesus here and everywhere. Trust he is with you always. See that he is love, and study the scriptures that show you he has risen indeed. Christ continues to reach out to us today to help us rise. See that Jesus is beyond time and space and also in the eyes of all

God's creation around us. Feel Jesus is in your heart and soul.

And be aware that Jesus is walking along with **you**. He will help you overcome your fears and your doubts on your journey through life when you open yourself up to faith in him.

Let's watch the video, "Overcomer" that I planned for last week. The theme sums up today's message, too.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8VoUYtx0kw>

Benediction:

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen



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