

“Emmaus”

Luke 24: 13-35

We continue with the season of Easter and today we get an Easter story for the rest of us, the rest of us who were not there on that first Easter morning, the rest of us who have not physically touched the Risen Christ, the rest of us who like these very disciples, went to the empty tomb, found it just like the women said, but didn't find or see Jesus. This story is for the rest of us, those of us who are experiencing the story of the resurrection some two thousand years later.

Oddly enough, I find it comforting that the authors of the Gospels include stories like this one for us post- first Easter people. These stories that let us know that we are not alone in our doubt, in our uncertainty, in our frustration, in our need to actually experience the Risen Christ, in our need to have something more ; something real; something tangible rather than let the resurrection be an experience that someone else tells us about.

I also find it oddly comforting that just like these very disciples, the Risen Christ can be in my very midst and I miss the signs. Well, that's not quite right. I guess I should say that in spite of the fact that I can get so caught up in my needs and wants and miss the Risen Christ, I find it comforting to know and to hold on to the assurance that this is not the end of the story. What I really should say is that

the comforting part of the post-first Easter story is that even when I get caught up in my own needs and wants, the Risen Lord meets me and shakes me out of my tunnel vision until my eyes are opened and I experience the Risen Lord right in front of me. That's the good news for me and for all of us as believers.

Luke shares this wonderful story about two disciples who were so disappointed, so disorientated, and so frustrated on that very Easter day when others were celebrating that they decided to leave town. They had heard the story from the women but to be honest their story sounded more like a cruel joke than anything they could really believe or find hope and comfort in. They had just lost their friend, their teacher, the one that they hoped would be the Messiah, who had come to make everything right and restore Israel once more, and now these ladies, these joyous, excited women were saying that Jesus had appeared to them, that Jesus was raised from the dead, that Jesus was alive.

It was all too much to take in. In fact, a group of them were so confused and shocked by the news that they went to the tomb themselves but when they got to the tomb, Jesus wasn't there like the women had said like he said he would be.

Sure the stone was rolled away. Sure the grave clothes were laying there but no Jesus. Surely, if Jesus had been raised from the dead, surely if Jesus had been resurrected, he would want to speak to all his disciples, those ones who were with him from the very beginning, those ones who had been with him from the start.

Surely, if Jesus was alive, he would have wanted to see all of his followers, not just a special few.

What made these ladies so special that Jesus came to them and not all the disciples? Why did Jesus choose to see just these few and not see everyone? Why didn't Jesus hang around the empty tomb until all the disciples could be there to find him and to see him once more?

All of it was just too much: the stories, the joy, the frustration, the doubt, the hurt, the anger. So these two disciples decided to leave because it was all just too much. And with each passing step, with each hurt emotion, their hearts and their minds become more closed off to the good news, the hopeful news that was just shared with them by their fellow disciples.

But along their journey to Emmaus, a place of safety, a place of refuge, a place where they just didn't have to hear anymore about this hurtful news and cruel joke that Jesus was alive, they encounter a stranger.

There was something oddly familiar about him but they just can't quite put their fingers on what it was. And then he began to speak

And again, there was something oddly familiar about his words. His words remind them of things that Jesus used to say...but then all of sudden, they remembered Jesus was gone. But still there was something familiar about what he

was saying. Jesus used to say things like that. He used to talk about God's saving acts from the very beginning...but then they remembered that Jesus was gone.

As the night fell and these two disciples got close to their refuge in Emmaus, they invited this oddly familiar stranger to stay with them. And a funny thing happened...the Risen Christ broke through all of their hurt, all of their doubt, broke through their frustration, and opened their hearts. He met them in that very moment and welcomed them as his very own.

Jesus took a loaf of bread, blessed it, and broke and gave it to them...And their eyes were opened and their hearts were healed. through those few simple words, they experienced the Risen Christ and they remembered. They remembered the promises that Jesus gave to them that he would never leave them lonely. They remembered Jesus' words of comfort and hope that even after he was gone, whenever two or three were gathered, Jesus would be there as well. They remembered how Jesus would tell them about the unconditional love of God through the stories of God's saving acts, testifying to God's grace and God's mercy now and forevermore.

Through the simple acts of breaking bread and sharing and remembering their stories with Jesus, remembering The Story of God's goodness and grace, these two disciples realized in that moment that their Lord and Savior had come to them once more. He had come to them just like he promised he would. He had

broken through their doubt, their frustration, their hurt, through their tunnel vision clouded by their own wants and needs to show them that he was there all along. They had just missed the signs.

These two disciples who had closed themselves off from God's gift of good news were now experiencing the Risen Christ in new and comforting but oddly familiar ways; they were experiencing the good news now as people brought back to hope once more through acts of discipleship that all believers are invited to experience. They were experiencing the Risen Christ by remembering and sharing the Word of God and through the breaking of bread: gifts of God's love for all of God's children.

Even when Jesus vanished, the hurt, the frustration and the doubt didn't come flooding back in. Because in that moment, these two disciples understood that Jesus is alive always, that Jesus is with us always because we are called to remember, because we are called to come to the table and share; because we are called to celebrate the story of how God has acted in the past, celebrate the story of how God continues to act in this world still, celebrate the story of how God has promised to work in this world always through the promise and the power of the resurrection by bring bringing new life to all of God's children.

It was in those moments of hope and fellowship that these two disciples realized that their Lord and Savior would always be with them now and forever

more because they understood that we have been given the Word of God to comfort us, to strength us, to inspire us, to guide us, and to lead us along our journeys. It was in those moments of recognition and realization at the table that these two disciples accepted the promise that their Lord and Savior would always be with them now and forever more because every time they would gathered around the table from now on, they would remember the sacrifice that Jesus made for all of his disciples, past, present and future.

And that is the good news and the blessings that are available to the rest of us this morning. We have the wonderful knowledge that just because we weren't at the empty tomb on that first Easter morning, that we didn't missed our chance to experience the Risen Christ. We are given that opportunity every time we engage in studying, in remembering, in reflecting, in sharing the Word of God. We are given the opportunity to experience the Rise Christ every time we break bread together as disciples of Christ.

As we continue our journeys of faith, We are invited to experience the Risen Christ for ourselves by engaging the Word of God, by breaking the bread, by embracing the wonderful understanding that Jesus Christ is alive. We are invited to allow these acts of formation, these acts of faithful discipleship, these life-giving transforming gifts from God to nourish us, to strengthen us, to shake us up and to

break through so that we can and will fully experience the Risen Christ in our lives.

The Good News for us, the rest of us, this morning is that the Risen Christ meets us where we are through the acts of engaging the Word of God and breaking bread together. The Good News for us is that our journeys of faith are opportunities for us to meet the Risen Christ. No matter where we are along these journeys, we have the promise that the Risen Christ will meet us where we are and shake us up and break us out of tunnel vision to really see and experience him. The Good News for us is that we have the promise that where ever two or three are gathered, the Risen Christ is with us, guiding us, leading us, and renewing us for our journeys.

The Good News for us, the rest of us, is that there are so many opportunities for us to meet the Risen Christ as long as we don't miss the sign but the better news is that even if we do, Jesus breaks through and shows us the power and the promise of the resurrection.

May we welcome the Risen Savior into our lives as we engage in the experience of God's word for us and as we break bread together as God's people, claimed and named as God's very own. Amen.