

## Encountered by Christ

Luke 24:13-35

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. 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.

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This is one of my favorite post Easter stories, and one of the interesting facts about the story is that it contains all of the elements of Christian worship. Two people are walking together and they are joined by a guest, and the scriptures are opened up and read. The three of them stop and have a meal together, and in the breaking of the bread Christ is revealed to them. The story closes as their hearts are warmed and they go to share and live the good news. This is why it is so important to us that we come to worship each week, for this is the place that Christ reveals himself to us through scripture and the breaking of bread so that we might be able to live out the gospel in our lives and share it with others.

Another part of the story has to do with the two disciples of Jesus who are walking down the road to Emmaus, confounded and full of sorrow following the death and disappearance of Jesus. When asked by the stranger why they looked so dejected, Cleopas says “We had hoped.” The words “We had hoped” seem so heart breaking to me. They had hoped that Jesus had come to redeem Israel, to free them from the Romans, to establish a new kingdom, to bring prosperity back to the people. They had hoped, but now their hope was vanquished.

The great American novelist from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ernest Hemingway, was once challenged to write a short story in six works. On a napkin he penned, “For Sale: Baby shoes, never used.” It’s not just the tragedy of what happened that hurts, but the gaping hole of all that could have happened but won’t.

We have all had hopes that did not come to fruition. You may have hoped at some point in your life that by some certain age you would have accomplished some degree of success, but for a variety of reasons the success was never found. You may have hoped that your relationship with your parents might have been different, yet the sad reality is some of the circumstances were outside of your control. You might have hoped that your relationship with a marriage partner might have worked out, but sadly it didn’t. You had hoped that your children would grow up

to be something other than what they are, but it doesn't happen as you had hoped. "We had hoped" becomes a chapter in all of our stories.

I had hoped that Kay Brookes would have been here today, riding the bus from the Saybrook at Haddam, but it didn't happen. I had hoped that as a pastor I would be able to bring more people into the church, but as of yet it has not happened.

Life is not all about vanquished hopes and broken dreams. Certainly life is filled with great joy and wonderment, exciting adventures, difficult tasks accomplished, and beauty that is indescribable. I cannot tell you the number of times I have sat here and been inspired by our organist and choir, and how many times I have moved by your stories and great generosity.

Our disappointments and unfulfilled dreams must not be glossed over, like rushing from crucifixion and jumping quickly to resurrection. When I was starting out as a counselor I would listen to people telling their stories of grief after going through a divorce. When silence fell across the room I was quick to fill the air with poorly thought out platitudes, such as "You will be ok. You are still young and attractive. You will meet someone else and it will be far better." My words were insensitive, but not intentionally. It is just so hard to hear people sharing painful stories, opening up their hearts and sharing heart-wrenching disappointments.

My son, who lives in Atlanta, with through a breakup with his girlfriend of five years, this month. Nobody had been unfaithful. There were no knock down, drag out fights. In fact, they still love each other. Their parting took place on Facebook this week, and with my son's permission I share this with you:

Vanessa: I suppose this is for the friends and family that don't know, but Kellen and I are no longer together... And we are ok. We still very much love each other but realized that we are not meant to be together. We understand that we are doing what is best for each other. With that being said my dad has come over here to Georgia and we are driving back to California. I look forward to seeing all my peeps again. — 😞 feeling down.

Kellen: I look forward to seeing what you do. You are one the best people that I know, and I'm sorry that this didn't work out. Everything will be okay.

Vanessa: I'm sorry as well, our time together was some of the greatest times of my life, I know when you get done with school there will be no stopping you, Kellen. It was supposed to work out for as long as it did. And I agree it will be ok.

Kellen: And some of the best times of my life as well. I think we both learned a lot being together. You are so incredibly smart and gifted, you will be just fine. Thank you for giving your time to me. You are an incredible person, and I love you dearly.

Which brings us back to the story of the two people walking seven miles from Jerusalem down the road to Emmaus. Before their hearts were warmed, they were broken. Part of our human experience is that we are broken. Sometimes we have to grieve a future that will never be. There is much to grieve in life: When the cancer has returned; when the job is lost; when the loved one dies; when the relationship is over.

So as we journey together, let us have the courage to share our broken hearts with one another and with God. Let us hear the words of scripture as they are read, and let us receive the bread and cup, seeing how Christ is revealed in broken bread and his life poured out for us like wine. And by worshipping together, may you be encountered by the risen Christ so that your hearts may once again be warmed. Amen.