

## **We Make the Road by Walking, Eating and Building Together**

Luke 24:13-32 (selected verses)

April 23, 2023 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter

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*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, ... But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel...."*

*Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ..." 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?"*

A few years ago my younger sister took on the task of going through my dad's 8 mm movies and having them converted to digital videos. Thanks be to God for her perseverance! One particular group of movies were taken of our extended family at the lakehouse of my aunt and uncle near Spokane. Family history. There is no sound of course. There I am with my sister singing in silence and pumping the player piano. There's my mom and dad relaxing on the patio, laughing with my aunts and uncles. What a wondrous thing to see them moving, laughing, so fully alive, years after they died. Even without sound those moving pictures bring people to life. A bit of nostalgia and joy and grief mixed together.

I also treasure the old photos – some in albums, some in stuffed envelopes, some now converted from slides to digital pictures. No sound, no movement, but I can sit and look at a photograph for a long time. The picture stands still long enough for memory to fill in the story, to bring buried feelings to the surface.

If you wanted to tell today's gospel story, would you tell it as a movie or in still photographs? Maybe neither or both. Usually, movies about biblical stories end up like *The Ten Commandments* – big and special effects. And it is dangerous to choose photographs that we think look like Jesus.

Let me ask the question another way: when you heard this gospel story read, were you most aware of moving or standing still? Do you remember walking on the road or sitting at the table? Is it more like a movie on the road or a photograph of bread broken & offered?

It is a story that makes us wonder - How does Christ, the Holy One, come to those who follow the ways of Jesus? What does it mean for risen Christ to stay with us, in us? Such questions are of pressing importance for Luke. Today's story stands between the resurrection of Jesus and the mission of the church described in Luke's second book called *Acts*. This story stands between Easter and Pentecost, when Jesus' followers form the early community and embody Christ's love.

So let's look again at today's passage and think about moving and standing still. It seems the story has to begin as a movie. Two disciples – not any of the famous 12 - were going -- are walking, moving. talking, discussing what had happened to them in recent days.

Whatever they were talking about as they walked, they must have thought their good times were in the past. They were not walking toward the next chapter. They were walking back to the past for a re-set. The time before Jesus and before they thought there was a change coming.

And then Jesus is with them, asking them what they were talking about. But they don't know who he is. The risen Jesus is not easy to recognize.

And they stop. They stand still, looking sad. A still photograph. "Are you the only person in the world who doesn't know what happened this week? Did you not ever get to hear Jesus speak to the crowds? Did you not get your hopes up that things were going to be different? That the Romans were on their way out?"

And so they tell him about this prophet they had known. "We had hoped." Such a power phrase. How do you capture that hopelessness in a photograph? There is no future. Nothing ahead, everything behind. No dreams, only memories made bitter by loss. This must be a still picture. **But we had hoped.** What would that moment, that photo look like in your own life? What have you hoped for? When did those hopes die? How do our hopes change?

And then Jesus calls them back to that sturdy, enduring hope they had as they followed him through Galilee. He lets them know that they shouldn't be traveling in defeat, but should be

moving into the mission of the church. "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!"

And then Jesus sets up his powerpoint projector, pulls out his pie charts and graphs, and brings this class to session! He interprets scripture, helping them see the long path of redemption and and wholeness and life and shalom that God has been working out since the beginning of time.

By the time the lecture is over, the three travelers have reached Emmaus. Jesus keeps walking down the road, but the two disciples stop him. A photo moment. "Stay with us. You shouldn't be on these roads at night. And my mom makes a great lasagna. I know there will be plenty to eat. Please stay with us." (Glass)

And he accepts their hospitality and their invitation. Then the movie starts again.

"When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he vanished from them. They followed him and he was gone."

Their eyes were opened. And their hearts. But, when? Is there one picture, one moment? Was it when they sat at the table, when he broke the bread? Or did it begin when they walked on while he opened the scriptures? This is a story of remembrance and recognition. Many moments of opening. While we may long for a special moment of revelation, a heightened experience of Divine presence -- this story from the first Easter day reminds us that the spiritual life is not so neatly captured.

Was revelation in the slow--walking journey as surely as in the breaking of the bread?

What about for us? Is something slowly happening to you, in you, each morning? Or at the end of a day? Is something happening in the weekly reading or worship services or Centering Prayer or Bible Study or helping at San Pedro School or on a job site in Paradise, CA?

Hopefully, you now know that this is not just a story about two disciples on the road to Emmaus two thousand years ago. There are two disciples. One was named Cleopas, and the other? The other is you. Or me. Luke left a blank space for us to fill in our own names. All our hopelessness is there on the road, every broken down dream, every doubt we've ever had or still have. Are you waiting for a clearer revelation, for deeper assurance of Christ's presence in your life? (Lundblad)

I like what Kathleen Norris says in her book, *Dakota; A Spiritual Geography*. She uses the word *Conversion*, I would use the word *Transformation* or *Awakening*. "Conversion means starting with who we are, not who we wish we were. Conversion doesn't offer a form of knowledge that can be quantified, or neatly packaged. It is best learned slowly and in community."

The journey, our journey, moves slowly frame by frame, most of the segments utterly ordinary. A few still photographs hold particular moments we might dare call revelation. Along the way we are sustained as they were by hearing over and over words of scripture we have heard before. Sometimes, it happens that our hearts are opened and we hear as though for the first time. Then at a table someone takes bread, blesses and breaks it and holds it out. One of those who receives the bread is named Cleopas. And there we are, being fed.

Luke offers us a story that moves us into the world and further down the road. We make the road by walking, sometimes moving and sometimes being still.

I originally heard the phrase “We make the road by walking” as a quote from one of my heroes, Brazilian educator/activist Paulo Freire. I later learned that it became the title of a book that was a dialogue between Freire and another educator/activist, Myles Horton, who was an important figure in the Civil Rights Movement in the US. Freire may have originally derived the quote from the great Spanish poet Antonio Machado:

*Wanderer, your footsteps are the road, and nothing more; wanderer, there is no road, the road is made by walking. By walking one makes the road, and upon glancing behind one sees the path that never will be trod again. Wanderer, there is no road— Only wakes upon the sea. —*

On this road

We make the road by walking, moving along, wondering, asking questions, savoring, praying, reading, working for justice & peace, listening to joys and sorrows.

On this road

We make the road by eating and breaking bread. We gather to break bread around this table, and in the chapel, and in Canoles Hall and the patio, and in homes as we bring meals to one another and share food and friendship with each other & our neighbors.

On this road

We make the road by building. We remember the words of Jesus – love your neighbor. This week that looks like taking hammers and tape measures and 2 x 4's and paint and building homes as part of the PDA team offering hope and help to the people of Paradise.

May we be open to moments that Christ opens our eyes and sets our hearts to burning. Amen.

Rev. Marci Glass, “Hospitality Challenge,” <https://marciglass.com/2020/05/17/hospitality-challenge/>  
Rev. Dr. Barbara Lundblad, “Moving and Standing Still,” [https://day1.org/moving\\_and\\_standing\\_still](https://day1.org/moving_and_standing_still)