

Please be seated.

(Luke 24:13-35)

Two disciples were walking to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all the things that had happened about the death of Jesus. While they were discussing this, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but they thought he was a stranger and their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

(Notice the value of community and good friends as they traveled together on the road to Emmaus and how they shared their struggles with one another. Notice too their willingness to accept a stranger – someone different than themselves, on their journey. In welcoming an outsider who was unknown to them, they welcomed Christ.)

Jesus 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.'

(Note how they shared with the stranger who Jesus was and what happened to him. As they spoke, their burdens were lifted. Speaking with friends and loved ones about our struggles in life brings comfort. Maybe you have found this to be true in your life. Often, when someone experiences the death of a loved one, I hear the story of how their loved one died and in the conversation the bereaved find comfort. Sharing our struggles in life is important.)

Then Jesus 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.

(The disciples learned that in their loss and emotional turmoil, God had not abandoned them, and that Jesus was part of the larger picture of what God was doing in their lives. Hope and joy were being born in their hearts. They were coming to realize that Jesus' death was part of God's plan and not a failure.)

As they came near the village to which they were going, Jesus 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.'

(It is important to note that their love and hospitality to this stranger was the doorway into an experience of the Living Christ. They begged the stranger to stay with them. Here we see that welcoming the stranger has a deep history and tradition within Christianity. Also in this passage, we see that God is found in relationships of love and inclusion of others.)

And so the stranger went in to stay with them. When he was at the table, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and Jesus 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 and while he was opening the scriptures to us?'

(Their eyes were opened to recognize Christ in the breaking of the bread. Although he physically vanished, Christ presence of hope and joy stayed with them.)

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and 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 Jesus had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

(Note that when they returned to the other disciples, they found the presence of joy and peace in community. Within the scriptures, all the other apparitions of Jesus would come to them within the context of fellowship and a loving community of relationships. Christianity, at its heart, is a community where we make room for those different from ourselves.)

In this story we find transformation by movement. God's Easter Spirit is found most significantly in process, rather than stability. To experience God's inspiration more fully, we have to be like the disciples on the road to Emmaus --- on the move, because God is movement and transformation.

Our Gospel is about a road trip. Two people walking a road with a sense of loss, with sadness of what had happened.

They are in the process of regrouping, going to join others in their community. And then the stranger joins them.

It is in the welcome of the stranger that they begin to leave behind their loss and fear. And then, in the breaking of bread, and the sharing at the table, their eyes are opened. They recognize that their road trip was one of transformation, their hearts were being warmed, and in the sharing of what they had they experienced, Christ became present.

God's resurrection power is found when we let go of familiar landmarks and ways of understanding.

Resurrection life is filled with abundant surprises and unexpected adventure. A living faith does not cling to certainty. The nature of faith is to walk into the unknown. We find God when we walk through our fear. Our boundaries are expanded and we see in new ways what is being asked of us.

In the welcome of the stranger, the travelers on the road to Emmaus give us a metaphor for our time. In the breaking and sharing of our resources we find ourselves surprised at discovering a new sense of the presence of Christ.

The lesson the disciples learned is that God meets people where they are and opens their eyes to new insights. He does not allow them to be stuck in the past, but moves them forward with new insight on the road of life. God gathers them in the communion of his own body and blood and nourishes them with his presence. Amen.

Baptism