

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

The Long Walk-Along

Gospel Lesson

Luke 24:13-35 (NRSV)

¹ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ 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?" ¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ 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. ²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³ 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. ²⁴ 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." ²⁵ Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight. ³² 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?" ³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴ They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Bible/Sermon Focus

In this series, *Encountering Christ: The Post-Resurrection Appearances of Jesus*, we have been considering the task of evangelism and how to introduce the *Risen Lord & Savior* to others, by looking at how the *Risen Lord & Savior* introduced himself in the post-resurrection accounts found in the Gospel.

Over the weeks of this series, we have seen a theme arise from these post-resurrection accounts. Jesus meets people, as they are, where they are. He does not demand that they

think like he does. He does not force himself on others. He is simply present with those around him.

How we love our neighbors and how we love God are certainly a huge aspect of evangelism. We are supposed to be the Gospel. We are supposed to be the good news to people in the world. Evangelism is inviting someone to know God, and we can certainly help facilitate that with our lives. But evangelism is also inviting someone to know God by inviting them to church. But when do we know to do that? Is there a sign?

In our scripture for today we are given a bit of a clue. This story, the "Road to Emmaus," was considered by the early church to be truthful, and also allegorical. It actually contains within the story the basic pattern for the order of worship (See the United Methodist Book of Worship pages 13-15)!

Additionally, this story offers us a structure for evangelism. First, Jesus meets these travelers where they are and he walks with them. He is present with them and he listens to them with care. This is our first step. We love our neighbor. Next, Jesus then shares his interpretation of the scripture, the good news. As Christians, we are indeed called to share what we know about the Gospel (the good news) of Jesus Christ. Sharing what you know about the grace of God is a good thing, as long as you're not harming people. And then, after revealing the scriptures to them, Jesus simply continues on his way. We do not need to force our beliefs on another person. We can simply share what we know and move on. If that person wants to hear more, if they want us to say more or to share more, then we can...which is what happened on the Road to Emmaus. He continued on his way until the two disciples invited him to stay, to share a meal, and to witness to the Risen Christ among them.

God will not *always* use you to reveal the Risen Christ to someone. But God *may* use you! So, we put our truth out there. First, the good news is revealed to our neighbor through our actions and our love. And then, if it is good news that is revealed, there's a good chance that neighbor would find a home at Manchester UMC. And if not, that's fine too! The second does not negate the first.

Beloved church, there are people out in our community who want and need (and deserve!) the compassion, grace, and encouragement that Manchester UMC offers. And it is up to us to invite them. Not every single person will be comfortable at Manchester UMC. The church of Jesus Christ is not dependent on one denomination or one house of worship. But this community of faith could be the spiritual home that someone needs.

So, we walk with others, showing them compassion and presence and love, and then we invite them to come along to this wildly loving and radical community. And maybe, they too will have their eyes opened, and they too will recognize him.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever invited someone to church? Why? How did it go?
2. Share a time when you've been to a church where you could not experience the good news of the Risen Christ.

3. When has someone come along side of you during a time of grief or joy?
4. How easy is it for you to share your theology with another person?
5. Who do you think would like our church? Imagine inviting them? What would that look like?

Prayer

Risen Savior, you who walk alongside us, even when we are unaware, thank you. You meet us in our struggle, in our grief, as well as in our celebrations and our success. Use us to introduce yourself to our neighbors by walking alongside them in their lives. Encourage us to share our selves with those around us in a spirit of invitation, knowing that our congregation may be exactly the community that they need. Amen.

"Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"