

Acts 2:14, 36-41; Ps 116; 1 Pe 1:17-23; Lu 24:13-35

On the Emmaus Road

Each one of us who has decided to follow Jesus has a story to tell. Each one here would share in a different way – their own personal encounter with the risen Savior. The journey to Emmaus is unique, because Cleopas and his friend knew and loved Jesus *before* He was crucified. Now, they meet Him *on the day he rose* from the tomb. Imagine the extreme surprise of seeing their rabbi alive! Jesus always surprises us. If you are hearing this story for the first time this morning – I am happy for you!

The first time I heard Cleopas ask Jesus, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” (Lu 24:18) I went back a couple of verses to be sure who he was talking to! Yes, it’s “Jesus himself,” Luke tells us. (v 15) The two disciples headed for Emmaus do not recognize Jesus. The Lord doesn’t say, “Of course I know the things that have happened!” He says, “What things?” There is nothing like hearing it for the first time! It is deeply humorous.

These two, headed for Emmaus, set about telling this stranger (who is the risen Lord) what has come to pass. The two travelers believe that all glory, all potential, all power – are in the past! It’s all over, they say. We have nothing to look forward to – no hope. What does Jesus say to them? (“Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!”) (v 25) Circumstances say, “You are sunk! It’s just bad news! There’s nothing for you in Emmaus! Just trudge through the coming days. Forget about salvation, deliverance, healing.” Church, should we be swayed by the world groaning in the midst of terrible circumstances? We who follow Jesus are not like the world in its despair and hopelessness. Everyone has been surprised and caught off guard by what we are now facing. Everyone. We dread surprise, don’t we?

Jesus is in the midst of those who believe and trust in him! Seeing Cleopas and his friend with Jesus in this scene, we realize this simple truth: Jesus is “with us always, to the end of the age.” (Mt 28:20) After Jesus has listened to these two discouraged, travelers, “Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them the things about Himself in all the scriptures.” (v 27) What a teaching! We still have Moses and the prophets. We still discover Jesus in the Old Testament. We still “Call on the name of the Lord” and “tell of all his wonderful works.” (Ps 105:1-2) We do it in worship, we do it in Sunday school, in Bible studies, in VBS...stories of God’s wonderful works – our own testimony of His work in our lives. ***We*** walk with Jesus – and He can walk ***with others*** through what we say and do. Stay on the Emmaus Road. There will be surprises! Pleasant surprises.

This resurrection day journey to Emmaus is the beginning of Jesus’ forty days on earth before He rose into heaven. He continues with ***us*** today – by the working of the Holy Spirit in our midst. How do we perceive that Jesus is present? He said, “Where two or three are gathered in My name, I am there among them.” (Mt 18:20) We experience the presence of God the Son by faith in ***what has been revealed***. Here is the proof: We are gathered (virtually) this morning in the name of Jesus. Jesus, who speaks only the truth, says, “I am here among (you).” (Mt 18:20)

As Jesus walks with them He fills their hearts and minds with not just the fact of His resurrection – but the ***meaning*** of it. It was foretold. Everything that has happened was meant to make real the joyful Good News of eternal life.

The travelers turn toward an inn for the night. The exact location of Emmaus is not certain. It is probably between nine and eighteen miles from Jerusalem. They invite Jesus to stay. They have dinner together. Jesus often spent time with others around the dinner table. In various places, traveling in ministry, meeting in Jerusalem, stopping in Bethany.

In Jesus’ 1st c. culture – and in ours even today – sharing a meal is a friendly, inclusive thing to do. It is a closer fellowship – it means true acceptance of one another. We Americans sometimes make it a fast-food meal shared in the car as we journey on to the next thing. This meal in Emmaus is a real eye-opener! It becomes for us – in the end

times – a way of being the family of God – the Christian Family. Being “blood relatives” does not necessarily mean we are born of the same parents. Think about it. We are united under the blood of this Worthy Lamb. We are brothers and sisters.

The two disciples see this unknown rabbi take the bread. He blesses it: **Blessed are You, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.** He breaks the bread to share. “Then their eyes are opened, and they recognize Him; and He vanished from their sight.” (v 31)

“They said to each other, ‘Weren’t our hearts burning within us while He was talking to us on the road, while He was opening the Scriptures to us?’” (v 32) In the presence of Messiah, the family of God is revealed.

How are we living out this hope of belonging, of being at home? How are we sharing it? Think about how we share food with our community, our nation and even the world.

Peter tells us how: “Now you can have real love for everyone because your souls have been cleansed from selfishness and hatred when you trusted Christ to save you; so see to it that you really do love each other warmly, with all your hearts. For you have a new life. It was not passed on to you from your parents, for the life they gave you will fade away. This new one will last forever, for it comes from Christ, God’s ever-living Message to (humankind).” (1 Peter 1:22-23 TLB)

Stay on the Emmaus Road – look for Jesus to surprise you again and again as you share what you have with others.
Amen.