

April 6 08 Communion Luke 24:13-35 (30-32)

## WALKING WITH JESUS

### (THEIR EYES WERE OPENED)

There is a program that we don't hear so much about these days that can help deepen ones faith. It's called the Emmaus Walk and is based upon this morning's scripture. Though I had recommended this walk to others throughout my ministry I had never taken time to make a Walk. It was at Roanoke and Secor, in that last year of so, that a bunch of people, men and women, took the challenge to grow in their faith and receive the Emmaus Walk experience. I think about 14 or more, both men and women, have attended an Emmaus Walk from there. Out of that group one now has gone through the beginning process to go into the ministry. Right now he serves as a part time local pastor assisting in a 5 point charge ministry. I saw his walk with Jesus blossom while I was his pastor. Truly his eyes were opened one day and his heart was strangely warmed and he recognized Jesus was calling him to a deeper walk.

That Emmaus experience, the renewing of my faith, prepared me to continue to take the hand of Jesus and walk with him down a new path that would lead to more joy as I continue to serve different people and continue to share his message of hope, peace, love, forgiveness, and eternal life. I knew even though the United Methodist Church was saying it was time to retire...., as a Christian, and as a

pastor serving Christ, God wasn't through with me yet. If Moses could lead God's people when he was over 80, so could I. If while in retirement God could have John write his messages that we find in scripture, then I guess he could use me to tell his story to others who are hungering to know Jesus and walk with him on a deeper level. So here I am today, still preaching, still sharing the joy of the Lord. (I believe there are couples from this church who have been on a walk to Emmaus and I bet they would share their experience with you. Perhaps you might want to go yourself.)

Walking with Jesus is important for all of us. Church is more than coming and sitting in the pews. Church is more than listening to the preacher preach. Church is more than a gathering place of God's people. Church, my friends, is a place we come to learn how to walk with God. Church is a place where your faith should be deepened and you learn how to have a relationship with God through Jesus, and to take his hand and let him guide you in everyday things. That's right! We are in training to learn how to walk with Jesus. We are Christians under construction. God has called us to be disciples learning what it means to be true Christians in all that we do and wherever we go. Whether we play sports, or go to work, or do other things, we are still Disciples of Christ who share his message with words and with our actions. Who knows, maybe, just maybe, your life can be an example to someone who is looking to turn their lives around. Maybe, just

maybe, the way you live your life can turn someone to God's healing hands of mercy.

You see, Jesus doesn't challenge us to be of one faith or another. He challenges us to be his followers. When our eyes are opened we realize God calls us to take Jesus' hand and walk with him. Like the hymn "In the Garden" he wants to walk with you, and talk with you, and tell you how much he loves you, "and the joy you share as you tarry there none other has ever known."

This morning's Scripture lesson is about 2 men who had been part of the crowd those last few days in Jerusalem when Jesus went on trial, was persecuted, crucified, died and was buried. I can't say how long they were followers, but they followed long enough to know there was something special about this man. So when he died on the cross they were devastated. When he was sealed in the tomb all their hopes seemed dashed. Listen to their story as they have lost hope in finding peace for today and for their tomorrows. Luke 24:13-35 is where we find their story. **READ my** focus is verses 30-32.

Three things I want to say this morning. First, **we meet Jesus when we least expect it.** Those 2 men had no idea they were sharing the road with the risen Christ. You see, they were caught up in their sorrow and their own despair and they could not see the forest for the trees. They weren't expecting to find Jesus on

that road. Yet, here he is with them and their hearts burned with excitement as this man broke open to them the Scriptures.

Friends, we meet Jesus at unexpected times. Sometimes you receive card or emails that are God moments. More and more country music mentions God moments. Carrie Underwood's "Jesus Take the Wheel" is a very moving experience on how someone heading into a wreck told Jesus to take the wheel of the car and let her not have a serious accident on this ice covered road with her brand new daughter in the back seat. When the car came to a stop she was so moved that God answered her prayer that she went further and asked Jesus to take the wheel of her life and direct her path. Yes, it's just a song, but I bet, no, I know many lives have been changed through that God moment through that song.

Sometimes a God moment comes through a powerful sermon as a pastor or evangelist introduces you to Jesus. It might be through the words of a hymn, either from long ago, or even a contemporary one. The other night at our district clergy party we had a fellow who played the hymns on the piano with pizzas and told the stories of those hymns. Not only were we entertained, but also those old hymn stories touched my heart and Carole's too.

**When we meet Jesus he awakens our soul.** How inspiring it is to read about people like Martin Luther or John Wesley or Calvin. Add Billy Graham, Max Lucado, Joel Osteen, and many others and you see how they learned to follow

Jesus. But don't forget those we find in Scripture. See how people like David struggled. He went from good guy to bad guy back to good guy. Through all of that we know one thing. God referred to him as the "man after his own heart." Think about Abraham who God called to follow him from Ur to the promise land. Many times he took things into his own hands, yet God blessed him and fulfilled his promise to make him the Father of multitudes when he finally surrendered to God's ways. Then we have Jacob, a twin who stole his brother's birthright, cheated his brother out of the family blessing, tricked his uncle Laban so he could have more livestock than his uncle, yet he met God and wrestled with him and God changed his name from Jacob, which means "cheat" to Israel, which means "You have struggled with God and overcome."

How about Peter? He goes from a man who always seemed to say the wrong things at the wrong time to being the one whom Jesus would lay the whole foundation of the Christian walk. His 3 denials topped off his life. He doubted at times, struggled with things Jesus did, was a fisherman who needed lots of refining. Yet in the end, when Pentecost came and he met Jesus again, or for the first time his eyes were opened through the power of the Holy Spirit and he gave one of the most powerful sermons ever which to this day is a model for all preachers because it tells of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. And we know that first sermon over 3,000 plus persons were transformed and began a journey to

walk with Jesus. And that was not the end for Scripture says “God added to their numbers daily.” And still does today.

So yes, we meet Jesus through the life of others. I met him through the life of Carole after she recommitted her life to Jesus and showed me through her renewed faith in Christ a peace and love that went beyond her being a Methodist or going to church on Sundays. Her renewed faith showed up in her daily walk doing things around the house, raising the kids and being a wonderful wife. Then there was my mentor Rev. Willis Miller, who was the Bible study teacher and Carole’s pastor. Through his help and mentoring I not only became a born again Christian, but a United Methodist, and to top that off, I responded to God’s call in my life to be His pastor serving in the United Methodist Church.

**We meet Jesus through the Lord’s Supper** we celebrate today. Through this Sacrament we remember his words that tell us that the bread is his body that was given for us on Calvary that we may live. The wine is his blood that was shed for us on Calvary to wash away our sins along with the sins of the whole world. It is through this Sacrament that we find forgiveness and life. It is through this Sacrament that we take Jesus with us when we leave this altar and return to the world we live in. It is through this Sacrament we receive strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.

Those 2 disciples who walked with Jesus on the road home never knew who it was that was with them until they invited Jesus to come into their home and share a meal. When Jesus took the bread, blessed it, and gave it to them their eyes were opened to the fact that the one with whom they were walking was none other than the risen Christ. And they looked at one another with great joy as one of them said, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us.”

Friends, that is true today. Many people are like those 2 disciples. They know of Jesus, follow Jesus, but something is lacking. Yet when they invite him in, then their lives are transformed, for their eyes are opened, they recognized Jesus, and their hearts burned with joy.

Today we can meet Jesus when we stop being skeptics and allow God to penetrate to our hearts. We can meet Jesus when we read his word, believe his word, and apply his word in our lives.

I pray this morning through this Emmaus experience that when you come to this communion table that your eyes will be opened, that you will recognize Jesus working in your lives, and that your hearts will be burning with excitement for our Savior lives today right here in the congregation of the Williamsville United Methodist Church. And he wants to walk with you and talk with you and tell you

how much he loves you. And the joy you will know will surpass any other joy you have ever known. So may it be today. Amen!