

“We Had Hoped”

Message by DD Adams

Providence United Methodist Church

3rd Sunday of Easter

May 4, 2014

The gospel lesson for today is taken from the book of Luke, chapter 24, verses 13 through 35. I'll be reading from the New Revised Standard Version. 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, 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.” Then he 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. 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?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they 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 he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

This is God's word for God's people. Thanks be to God. Risen Christ, bless the reading, hearing, and understanding of the scriptures today. Sharpen our senses to feel your presence walking with us in this story. Strengthen and refine our listening as we tune our spirits to your words. Amen.

Throughout human history and in all cultures people have believed in life after death. It's seems to be a common thread that runs through us. We want to hope that there's more. The Native American believed they would live forever and that their spirits would hunt the spirits of buffalo. Christians believe that the moment we receive Christ into our hearts we begin to live eternally.

But there are times in our lives when we feel deep disappointment. Surely that's how the two companions felt as they walked the 7 miles to Emmaus. They

were discussing and reasoning about the events of the last few days. Scripture says “they had hoped” that Jesus would change everything for them, but he was gone. There were some women that said they’d seen him, but the tomb was empty. Jesus was gone. They hung their heads. They walked along and felt so heavy with disappointment.

They had hoped that Jesus was the one to redeem Israel. They’d been hoping ever since they met him, but now their hopes were gone. *They had hoped* it would turn out differently. Here today, some of us, if not all of us, have the same feeling about many things in our lives. Yes, we know, the resurrection happened and Jesus is alive yet we cannot deny the reality of some of our deepest disappointments along our spiritual journey.

With the two companions going to Emmaus a stranger suddenly began walking with them. He seemed to know nothing about what had been going on in Jerusalem. They told the stranger all about Jesus of Nazareth—how he was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. They told about the chief priests and leaders who handed him over to be condemned to death, and then they crucified him. The companions then listened to the stranger *tell them* all about Moses and the prophets. He interpreted to them the things all about himself in the scriptures, but “they had hoped” that Jesus would be the one—the one to redeem Israel.

They didn’t recognize him until they were having dinner together. They couldn’t see who he was until—he broke the bread. It was then that their eyes were opened. They recognized the stranger. It was Jesus! He disappeared from their midst just as quickly as he had appeared. They were so close to the risen Lord they didn’t recognize him. He was right in front of them, and they couldn’t see him. Well, nothing really unusual about that. On Easter morning how did you feel? We

celebrated the Resurrection, but soon after we left the church we encountered traffic, horns blowing, and people upset with one another at our Easter dinners. They were all reminders of how *WE HAD HOPED* things might be different, and the reality of our disappointments come back. Maybe bitterness sets-in or anger rises up, and maybe the worries and time lost begin to capture us.

But there's another reality and another perspective when we look at scripture and participate in Holy Communion. Listen, the two companions reasoned and discussed all about Jesus and what had taken place. They sunk way down and understandably so, but then their eyes were opened when they recognized Jesus. They were filled with joy! Jesus opened their eyes to recognize him in the breaking of the bread. Their belief is chased away, their sadness turns to joy, and they confess that Christ is Risen! Immediately they told others what they'd seen. They began to feed the hungry, to serve others and give. They witnessed, they preached, and they loved each other.

Through our deep disappointments Christ walks with us. When we see more clearly *that reality*, we trade some of those soapboxes we stand on for serving others. We replace some of that bitterness with kindness. We exchange some of that anger for forgiveness, and we worry less and decide to be more present for others. We're all on this road to Emmaus. We're all connected and together we walk with Christ. We learn to put some of *our* disappointments aside, and we break bread with our Risen Lord. Today we come together as one and are made stronger to go into the world by the strength of God's spirit. Through reading the scriptures and knowing that as we participate in Holy Communion we experience the living presence of Christ.

Let's be thankful as we retell the stories of Jesus and break bread. Let's trade some of our disappointments for what Christ is offering, because the risen Christ is

in our midst. He provides strength and nourishment for the journey. We have all we need just as the two companions did walking to Emmaus with the Christ. We hear the scriptures, and we break the bread in the presence of the Risen Christ. Let this be the day we lay down some of those disappointments from the past. Let's look *to Christ* to be what we had hoped.

Let's pray. Risen Savior, open our eyes to see you. Let us prompt each other to see you as we walk the Emmaus road together. Encourage us to hear the scriptures and to know it's you that helps us lay some of our disappointments down. Lift us up Lord so we can lift others up. Remind us that as we walk you walk with us, and *you are what we had hoped and so much more*. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.