

Their Eyes Were Opened

Luke 24:13-35

April 8, 2018

First United Methodist Church, Lindstrom

(This is a manuscript prepared for sermon delivery and may not represent actual words spoken.)

Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.

Okay, so we know that the cross worked because the tomb was empty. The real proof that Jesus had risen and was—and is—alive was in the appearances he made after the resurrection. Today we read about Jesus appearing to two folks as they walked along a road to a village called Emmaus.

This Emmaus story is truly a wonderful story. It is at once moving and hopeful and inspiring. It is a story that gives witness to the resurrection. This story is an explanation of the empty tomb.

What happens in this text is directly connected to the resurrection. It begins with, “Now that same day....” This is the day of the discovery of the empty tomb. Two men are travelling to Emmaus—a seven-mile hike. The fact that there are two is important. According to Jewish regulation, there needs to be at least a two-fold witness in order for a thing to be believed. The fact that there are two travelers validates their witness.

The two guys are discussing all that had happened that day. Jesus himself—Luke is emphatic about that—Jesus himself starts walking with them. The two are kept from recognizing him. Why is it they do not recognize Jesus? This is the question to which people want an answer. And the best answer is I don’t know. The precise location of this village of Emmaus is not known, but most accounts place it west of Jerusalem. So perhaps these two are walking into a setting sun. Maybe there is some divine initiative in all this. I don’t know. The why is not all that critical. They just don’t recognize him. They think Jesus is

dead. What is important is they don’t recognize him. Later they will.

Jesus asks them what they are talking about. We get the name of one of them...Cleopas. Cleopas seems a bit surprised that Jesus is not aware of all that has happened. So the two of them start telling Jesus about Jesus. That is interesting. Two guys walking along with Jesus...not recognizing Jesus...and then telling Jesus about Jesus. They confess Jesus as a prophet...powerful in word and deed and all that. Then they tell Jesus what happened to him. He was crucified. Then they reveal to Jesus their hope. “We had hoped he was the one who would redeem Israel.” Then they reveal their confusion. The tomb is empty.

Great response by Jesus...not that Jesus would ever give anything less than a fantastic response. “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” Now Jesus has heard these guys tell him about himself. Jesus now tells them about himself. How cool is that? Beginning with Moses and then the prophets, Jesus explains to them all of what the Scriptures say about him. We’re talking the Old Testament here...the Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus is all through the Scriptures. The Bible points us to Jesus. You have heard me say many times that if we read the Bible and come away from that without having seen Jesus...well, then we have missed all that we are supposed to see. It is all about Jesus.

They get near to their destination. They strongly urge Jesus to stay with them. Notice that Jesus serves them. He is a guest in their home. But he is the one who takes the bread and offers a prayer and gives it to them. It is then they recognize him, and Jesus is gone. Some say this

was communion here. No. It was a meal. Ordinary meal. Jesus is recognized in his serving them.

These two then go back to Jerusalem and report what had happened.

This is a great story...one, I think, that speaks to us in so many ways.

We see that Jesus is alive and Jesus meets us right here. I mean, Jesus is not only our Savior who we will one day meet somewhere up there...wherever up there is...in heaven. Jesus meets us right here and right now. Jesus walks along the road with us.

It was just a road...an ordinary road. Two guys were walking along and talking over the latest big issue and crisis in their lives. They were heading home...not knowing what tomorrow might bring. And Jesus was there.

It does not matter where we find ourselves. Jesus is there. This resurrection deal is not merely some great truth that has future meaning for us. Like...our lives on this earth end at some point in the future...and then we live forever with Jesus where Jesus is now. That is true...but Jesus also meets us this day. Jesus meets us right where we are...on the path we are walking. We just need to take a look and see him and recognize him. Jesus is right here.

Then as Jesus walks with us, he—he alone—makes sense of things.

People these days are searching for answers. We would all like to have all the why questions answered. What is happening in the world today? Why is what is happening...happening? Are there answers? Is there a solution?

As followers of Jesus, we do know that one day we will know. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." We know that one day there will be no more pain or crying or anything bad. Still...we

wouldn't mind knowing a bit more now...having an answer or two today.

Well...seems to me that the only way we can begin to make sense of things now—and it is only a beginning—is by turning to Jesus...by looking to Jesus. Jesus makes sense of things. These two guys on their way to Emmaus had all kinds of questions about what they had witnessed...the violence towards Jesus...the death...the news about the empty tomb. They had questions about their shattered hopes and dreams. And there was Jesus. He explained it...explained it from Scripture. It began to make sense.

Jesus makes sense of things. We turn to Jesus and look at Jesus, and life and things will begin to come into focus.

Finally, quickly, I am always struck in this story how Jesus became the host. He was in their home, yet he broke the bread and served them. But then one of the themes all through Luke's Gospel is Jesus welcomed sinners and ate with them. Jesus is always welcoming. Jesus is alive. He is with us. He welcomes us. He eats with us. Jesus always welcomes sinners.

Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.