
 “On the Road to Emmaus”

Luke 24:13-49

¹³Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then 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?” ¹⁹He 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, ²⁰and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹But 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. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and 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. ²⁴Some 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.” ²⁵Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. ²⁸As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹But 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. ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They 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?” ³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Lord, you opened the meaning of the Scriptures to the disciples on the road to Emmaus and set their hearts ablaze. By the power of your Spirit kindle our hearts as we hear your word proclaimed, that we may receive you with joy. Amen.

Two of them were on their way to Emmaus; the name of one was recorded as Cleopas. These two however, were not part of the inner circle of the 12 disciples, and the name, Cleopas, does not appear anywhere else in the New Testament. The only thing that comes close is the mention of Clopas who is named as the husband of one of the Marys that gathered at the cross of Jesus in John’s account of the crucifixion.

In any event, these two were on their way to Emmaus, and they had a lot on their minds: dashed hopes, fear, confusion, despair, now what? Add to this the mystery of Jesus raised from the dead joining them in conversation. But the two did not recognize Jesus when he joined them. Why not, I wonder? What did the risen Jesus look like?

I’m always fascinated by the different gospel accounts which depict the disciples as sometimes having difficulty recognizing the risen Jesus in their midst. Paul’s account in 1 Corinthians suggest that Jesus was raised in a spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:42-44). What was that like?

Mary Magdalene didn’t recognize Jesus until he called out her name (John 20:11-18). The two walking to Emmaus didn’t recognize Jesus until he broke the bread. We are clearly in the realm of mystery here. So it strikes me that the road to Emmaus is a fitting metaphor for our struggle to recognize the risen Christ in *our* midst, and therefore in *our* lives.

In this light we might say that we are all on the road to Emmaus; our lives are like a journey along this road, and Jesus comes along to join us in the journey. Unfortunately, more often than not, we don’t recognize the Risen One who walks along with us, and yes, even engages us in conversation. Jesus, the Christ, joins us and we are clueless. How come?

Well, the road to Emmaus is not easy; there are hills and valleys, good times and bad. Life deals us many distractions, trials and tribulations. Even a wonderfully blessed and full life comes with its share of disruptions: there are demands of a family and the task of raising children; there are concern for jobs and how to cope with debt; there are struggles with illness and addiction, aging parents, grieving, divorce, fear, depression, and on and on.

Is it any wonder that we can’t recognize our Risen Companion who walks with us? When we are overwhelmed with day to day life, who can tune in to the mysterious presence of our Lord?

The road to Emmaus is the road of life; fortunately it is also the road that Jesus walks. If we could only trust that it is in those times of struggle that Jesus draws closest. Could it be true that Jesus comes along side in precisely those times we are lost and hopeless, and

surrounded by despair? It seems a bit ironic that when we are most overwhelmed with day to day struggles, unable to see the forest for the trees, *that* is when Jesus draws closest. This *is* the Gospel's good news.

Good news indeed! Jesus walks with us even when we are so distracted that we can't recognize him right there in front of us. And isn't that one of the reasons we come to church, so that we can be reminded of Jesus' faithful and abiding presence? Our life in church is meant to show us again and again, Sunday after Sunday, that Jesus *is* indeed with us.

Our church is the community that makes the risen Christ visible in loving acts of compassion. Our church is the place where we see Jesus in human flesh, reaching out to embrace the one who is grieving, or to sit with the one fearful of a life-changing diagnosis.

The church is the body of Christ, called to make the risen Lord visible and *recognizable*. In other words; we, the church, are called to love each other with a love that motivates our action. Our worship is a celebration of resurrection; Jesus' resurrection. Our Lord lives, and promises, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

So our job, again this week, is to make the risen Lord recognizable to all those we live with, work with, play with; to all those we meet and greet; to the stranger, to our neighbor. So if we can imagine our risen Lord breathing in us, perhaps we can imagine Christ's breath flowing through us and out into the world. Every person we see can be our target to send Christ's breath flowing into them carrying God's love. And who knows where that will lead!

A HOLE IN A FLUTE - Hafiz

I am a hole in a flute
that the Christ's breath moves through
listen to this music

I am the concert from the mouth of every creature
singing with the myriad chorus

I am a hole in a flute
that the Christ's breath moves through
listen to this music