

Luke 24:13-35
April 30, 2017

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Today we get this well-known passage from the gospel of Luke. In fact, Luke is the only gospel writer to give us this account and aren't we grateful he did. This passage resonates so profoundly with God's people. How many times have we found ourselves in a similar position traveling down a dusty road ... our hopes dashed from something life has thrown at us ... saddened, in despair, wondering about the future ... and longing to see Jesus in our midst; even though, all the while he has been with us on that journey.

We don't know exactly why these 2 disciples were returning to Emmaus. It appears they are going home. Possibly to safety. To escape the same fate, which Jesus encountered. Possibly to lock the doors and stay inside just as the other disciples have done. Possibly, they simply are returning to their former lives. Jesus is dead. Gone are hopes of a better tomorrow. Gone are the dreams of being free of Roman domination and control. Gone is being part of Jesus' mission. What next? What now? So they return to their former lives. Their families. Their jobs. And as they do they are met by Jesus; yet, they don't recognize him.

I have often wondered why this is. It happens so often in these post-resurrection encounters. Jesus is not readily visible to those he encounters. Why can't their eyes see Jesus? Why can't our eyes see Jesus? There is no doubt that sin often gets in our way of seeing Jesus. Luther said somewhere that sin is none other than be turned inward on oneself. That is we are focused on our own wants, desires, needs, and thus we fail to see the other. We fail to see the world. We fail to see God. We, the body of Christ, the church certainly fall into this trap at times. We respond just as these disciples did. We at times are saddened. We stand still. We speak words such as, "We had hoped for more people in worship." "We had hoped for a larger offering." "We had hoped things would stay the same." "We had hoped for more families and kids." We, too, turn inward. Focused on our own wants. Focused on our survival. Focused on meeting our own needs. Focused on fulfilling our wants when it comes to the church. We lose focus. We fail to see Jesus in our midst – a stranger on the road. A stranger in need of safe harbor for the night. A stranger in need of a meal after a long day of travel. We fail to see he has been there all along.

Often times our inability to see the risen Christ is because our image of who He is and who God is, is skewed. We want a God who sets everything right. A God who rescues us from everything wrong in the world. A God who doesn't

allow us to go through suffering. A self-help God. A God who brings us glory, power, and riches. And when things don't improve overnight. When the illness doesn't go away. When we don't get that job we had interviewed for. Then we struggle to see this risen Jesus because we simply can't understand how God could allow these things to happen. Where can the risen Christ be in all of this?

I have always struggled with this passage in that it says the disciples eyes were kept from seeing Jesus as if God intervened and made this happen. Does God keep our eyes from seeing Jesus? What good can come from this? Why can't they just see the risen Jesus immediately? See him in all his glory. Why don't they fully see and recognize him until they share a meal. A meal that is none other than the last supper he shared on the night before his death. A meal that reminds them of the sacrifice he will make. A meal that predicts his death. His body and blood given for the world. And while we don't fully know it seems to me that the disciples can't fully see the risen Christ until they return to His death. Until, as we saw last week with Thomas, they encounter the wounds in his hands, feet and side. These two disciples aren't able to see Jesus until Jesus once again teaches them about what the prophets of old have said in scripture. That the Messiah sent by God will indeed suffer. That this Messiah will be a different kind of Savior. Not of power and might. A God that redeems the world of sin. A

God that restores people to a right relationship with God solely through the grace and love of God. A God that meets the world in pain. In suffering. In death. We can't see the risen Christ unless we also see the Son of God dying on a cross. The Son of God journeying alone to Golgotha. The power of God found in weakness. The two go together. His death and resurrection. You can't have one with that other. It isn't until those first disciples grasp this that they can finally see the risen Christ present with them.

This isn't a God we can always make sense of. We will struggle to comprehend God's ways. God's presence. But in Jesus, we see a God who doesn't magically make all things better. Who doesn't provide for our every want. But we see a God who does journey with us and doesn't leave our side even when we fail to see and acknowledge him. In Jesus, we find a God who listens intently to everything we bring to him. He listens to our struggles. Our fears. Our sorrows. Seeing Jesus fully means we see Him enter in the mess of life. His resurrection makes no sense without the cross and his death. Until we see that we can't see the fullness of God who conquers death. Overcomes sin. Opens up the door to new life. A God who lives. A God who loves. A God who journeys with us on the dusty, lonely roads we so often find ourselves on.