

Luke 24:13-35
April 26, 2020

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

Do you remember that old Life cereal commercial featuring 3 young boys gathered around a kitchen table? They appear to be brothers and in researching the age of this commercial (1971 – how can that be?), I discovered those 3 boys were brothers in real life. A bowl of Life is positioned on the table before the 2 oldest boys. Apparently, this is their first exposure to Life and they each skeptically stare at the bowl until one asks, “What’s this stuff?” The other responds, “It’s Life and it’s supposed to be good for you.” Then they attempt the other to take the first bite. When neither gives in, they look at Mikey, their younger brother who appears to be 3 or 4 years of age and state, “Let’s get Mikey ... he won’t eat it, he hates everything!” To their surprise, Mikey begins taking bite after bite and one of the brothers exclaims, “He likes it. Mikey really likes it!” If you are not familiar with that video, you can find it on YouTube.

In some ways, earlier this week I approached our gospel text a bit like those two older brothers. A bit skeptical and unsure if I wanted to proceed. My consternation stemmed with the final few verses as Jesus and the two disciples gather around a table, sharing a meal and finally, “their eyes were opened, and they recognized him [Jesus].” (v.31) My initial reaction, and perhaps yours as well, was to instantly gravitate toward the sacrament of Holy Communion. That blessed Passover meal Jesus shared with his disciples on the night proceeding his death, which Christians have celebrated ever since. A meal in which we believe Jesus yet again makes his presence known. In a time in which we cannot physically gather as the church around the altar behind me to partake of this meal, how does one approach this passage. *I had hoped* that by now we would be together again. *I had hoped* by now we could celebrate that beloved meal and hear those grace filled words, “This is my body given for you (plural).” “This is my blood given for you (plural).” And *I had hoped* yet again the Holy Spirit would equip us with eyes of faith to see Jesus presence in that sacred meal.

Yet my hopes have not come to fruition. Nor have yours that we are together again. So, I stared at the text before me, wide-eyed and wondering if I wanted to take a bite but then something happened. I liked it. I really liked it. It is not that I did not like it before, because I have always enjoyed this passage. However, it is that the Spirit seemingly have me new eyes and a new perspective to see the overabundance of grace, joy, and good news in this story that only Luke tells. I discovered the text to be exactly what we need to hear today in the new way of life we are settling into as each day passes and one more hope we had is snuffed out.

“But we *had hoped* that he [Jesus] was the one to redeem Israel.” (v.21) It appears the two disciples walking along the road, returning home from Jerusalem in which they had high hopes Jesus was the one to rescue them from Roman rule are grieving. Perhaps dismayed as they were talking with one another about all that has happened. Comforting and consoling one another when suddenly, a stranger happens by and goes with them along the road to Emmaus. The stranger of course is Jesus; however, they cannot yet recognize him. Perhaps, it is their sorrow, despair, and uncertainty that has clouded their vision of observing the risen Jesus entering into their time of trial. Whatever the reason they do not yet recognize Jesus, notice what Jesus does. He accompanies them. He listens to them and gives them space to tell their story. He enters their grief and allows them to name what they had hoped for and now seemingly is gone as a result of his death. Jesus, the empathetic friend, journeys with and in due time again teaches. Unpacks the wisdom and promises of God shared through Moses and the prophets in the words of scripture to help clarify their vision and restore their hopes. Much like the way the Holy Spirit continues to accompany us today and bring to us the life-giving and abundant words of promise located in the Bible when, we too may struggle to see and sense the presence of the risen Christ among us tarry down the path of life. In some cases, we know where that path will lead. At other times, we are on a path in which we do not yet know where it will lead as Governor Reynolds stated in her news conference this past Friday. This is the path we started nearly 2 months ago. A path that has led us to retreat to our homes for our own safety; but, also for the safety of our neighbor.

Home is where the road to Emmaus leads these two disciples. It is where they offer the invitation to Jesus, yet seemingly a passerby on the road to them as they are not fully aware of his identity, to “stay with them, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” (v.29) It is in their home, gathered around a table, when Jesus suddenly becomes the host taking the bread, blessing it, breaking it, and giving it to them. It is in their home their eyes are opened and they recognize the risen Jesus.

It is in the home where I suspect most of you are present in worship this morning. My initial hesitation and fear, which stemmed around trying to find hope in a meal we cannot presently share all but vanished as the Spirit opened my eyes. Jesus’ ministry often found its locus in the home, around a table. Even before the final supper and the church’s identification with it as a sacrament. Jesus just came to people in a normal, daily meal within the confines of their homes. All sorts of people, such as Levi the tax collector and other who are identified by the Pharisees as “sinners.” And despite that, we often find Jesus dining with those religious leaders teaching them about the kingdom of God and the great banquet yet to come.

Jesus ate but he also healed in homes. For example, Simon’s mother-in-law suffering from a high fever. Or the paralytic carried in by others and lowered down through tiles in the roof of a home to Jesus present inside who forgives the man of his sins and then heals his ailment. Or the daughter of Jairus, a leader of the synagogue, whose daughter lie in bed has just died from some sort of illness and Jesus comes to her bedside and raises her to new life.

So while some hopes, such as gathering together yet again to celebrate the meal of love Jesus invites us to, have not yet materialized and the road of uncertainty we are on and when we will finally gather again lies beneath our weary feet, our hope is not lost. Our hope is found in the promise the risen Lord meets us on the path of uncertainty. Our hope is found in the promise the risen Lord meets us in the path that leads us to our homes. Our hope is found in the grace of the divine counselor who stands by our side, kneels at our bedsides, gathers around our tables and hears our prayers, forgives our trespasses, soothes our aching souls, and makes his presence known. Our hope lies in the one who transforms our “we

had hoped for(s)” into “we have seen(s)”. The one who allows us the space to voice our disappointment but then instills in us hope for the future. Hope is not lost. Hope is at hand in the risen Lord who meets us at all times and in all places. Our hope lies in the fact we will most certainly gathering again around the table of our Lord and be together as we join in the great and abundant feast of love offered here to all.