



We Had Hoped

Luke 14:13-35

Sunday, April 30th, 2017 - Third Sunday in Easter

First Federated Church, Peoria, Illinois

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Text:

On that same day, two disciples were traveling to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. (v. 13)

To disciples were traveling to a place called Emmaus; Cleopas and an unnamed follower of Jesus. We don't know much about Cleopas. He is only mentioned twice in the New Testament; once here and again, in passing when a woman is called Mary of Cleopas, another way of saying wife of Cleopas. Other than that, we know nothing about him. And the other disciple? Nothing. This got me to wondering; could Luke have intended for the unnamed disciple to be his readers. Could the unnamed disciple be you and me? Could this story be about *our* walk to Emmaus?

The lesson takes place on Easter evening. As they walked along trying to make sense of everything that happened over the previous few days, a Stranger appeared and began to walk beside them. He asked what they were talking about. Surprised they began to recount all of the events that left them bewildered.

"We had hoped", they said, "we had hoped." We had hoped that Jesus would be the one, the one to make Israel great again, the one to remove the boot of Rome, the one would be the new David. We had hoped. You can hear the grief in their voices.

Grief. The Stranger appeared to Mary, in John's gospel, as she wept outside His tomb. She couldn't see Him at the time. Was it because tears of grief blinded her vision? She didn't recognize Him until He spoke her name; Mary. Here, in the midst of grief, He came to her. I believe that the Risen Lord comes to us in the midst of our grief. It is the Risen Lord Who gives us the strength to carry on, to make the hard decisions, to simply get up in the morning.

Community. Note that the Risen Lord appeared to the *two* of them. Earlier Jesus said that whenever as few as two or three are gathered in His name, He will be there with

them. And in John's gospel, He promised that he would not leave his followers—his disciples—orphanded, alone, abandoned. But Another would come; the Comforter, the *Paraclete*, the Holy Spirit.

Community is essential to our life together. From Genesis to Revelation God is revealed in community. When my father-in-law died I inherited his rock polisher; a rubber cylinder attached to a system of pulleys and a motor. It was a hobby that he took up in retirement. The way the rock polisher works is that you put selected stones into the polisher, add water and increasingly finer "grit" over a number of weeks, seal the stones in the polisher, turn it one and walk away. It takes time and patience but the finished product is a beautifully polished stone ready to be set in a tie clasp, necklace or bracelet. It is in community that our rough edges are worn down revealing the beauty that God sees in us. And we, in turn, rub the rough edges off of others.

Community means more than fellowship hour after worship. It involves prayer groups, study groups that engage the participant and do not merely resemble a university lecture hall.

Sacraments. It was when the Risen Lord sat down to table with the two and broke the bread that their eyes were opened and they recognized Him. The sacraments are essential to our faith journey. The baptism font reminds us of God's unconditional love. The Table renews us to *be* the Body of Christ on earth.

In keeping with this understanding, at their last meeting the Executive Board reinstated the sacrament of communion on the first Sunday of each month. Sometimes we will come forward and be reminded of our walk to Emmaus. Sometimes we will receive the elements by intinction. At other times we will pass the elements to one another and in so doing be reminded that we are a priesthood of believers, called to serve one another as well as God's world.

Each of us are on a journey to Emmaus. The Risen Lord meets us when we are in community, even in our grief and in the celebration of the sacraments. Be not afraid. Amen.

Emmaus