

Would We Know it if We Bumped Into Him on 200<sup>th</sup>?

Luke 24: 13 – 35

Northwood United Church

May 4, 2014

Would you pray with me?

Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of all of our hearts be pleasing to you, our God, our strength, our life. Amen.

If you have been coming along with us in the Lectionary, you know that this year we are jumping in the Easter story from John to Luke in order that we might continue with this exploration of the different ways folks experienced the resurrected Jesus.

Lets just go back a minute and see where we've been:

First we have Mary Magdalene in John who sees the empty tomb, runs to get Simon Peter and another guy who beat her back there, they see the cloths, get it (!) and head out, leaving poor Mary weeping at the opening of the tomb. The angels show up and ask her why she is weeping – and then Jesus shows up and asks the same question – woman why are you weeping? Hello! And she is just distraught – can you picture it? When I am in a state, let me tell you crying, my face gets red, my nose starts running, I'm a total mess – there she was, just a wreck, a ball of grief. 'Mary', he says (*revelation*). Recognition, Rabbi! In her desperation and reaching – he says 'do not cling to me but rather go and tell the others' – and she does.

Then we have the doubting Thomas story – poor Thomas, the guy has a bad rap basically forever from this story, (*arms crossed*) 'Nope, no way, not a chance, don't buy it, wont until I stick my finger in the holes on his hands'. We can judge him – 'oh Thomas, oh you of little faith' but let me tell you, I have been there! 'nope, no way, no how'. And what happens? He gets the proof he needs, I'd imagine he feels a little sheepish about it.

And now this week with these fellows on the road – they are bummed, walking down the road, deep into trying to make sense of all that has happened, along comes some guy who doesn't know the big news that EVERYONE knows, geez, poor guy – 'what's happening guys?' 'we were just talking about all the things that just happened' 'what things' 'seriously? Seriously!? Hello – Jesus, crucified, supposed to save us, pff, its been three days'

Uh huh.

So then Jesus lets them know about the scriptures about *himself* and they are still not getting it. So he gets ready to head on down the road and they are like well, its late, why don't you come on in and he does, and in the breaking of the bread, (*snaps*)

their eyes are opened and he's gone! Then right away they head back to Jerusalem to share the good news.

So here we have three of many different encounters with the risen Christ. First – Marys just such a mess she cant even register that God is right there with her. Second, Thomas' ego closes the door to the fact that God is right in front of him. And now, these guys, bummed right out, right before this in Luke we hear that they've just come from Mary Magdalene and some others telling them what had happened and it says, "they didn't believe a word of it, thought they were making it all up." So someone has told them the capital G and N Good News, and they're like, nah, then God shows up and starts spelling it out for them, nope, right above their heads, its all theory at that point. The practice of breaking bread together is what does it for them, their service to God allows them to see.

What we have here is this amazing invitation through Scripture to wade into the Easter story and feel out what it means for each of us – this is more than a story about resuscitation! This is resurrection! This is NEW life that we are offered through the risen Christ. So how do we experience Jesus resurrection? How can we respond to the Easter story ourselves? Because the resurrection isn't the end of the story – its the very beginning really. But it begins in grief, in sorrow, in disbelief, in *won't* belief.

Looking around this room today, there are folks eyeballs deep in grief, in sorrow, in pain, in the dark.

From our story today, in their grief, the men are walking the road to Emmaus, which, as side note, translates to *warm spring*, but I would offer that we all have our Emmaus. Our place that we run to when we are despairing, when we have lost hope. For some, it is this building right here, it could be our parents house, a friends house, a trail in the woods.

As they walk down the road, they are sharing the stories and experiences of Jesus; they are grieving together. Even as they explore scriptures (with Jesus) they are partaking in that process. They are in community, working it out. Even that is kind of revolutionary in our culture outside of these walls which demands that you do it all yourself.

But the key for them is the sitting down and breaking bread together. In that act, they are going beyond the intellectual understanding and they come to see it with their *hearts*. That which is right in front of them.

So I would ask you to just take a moment. First, where or what is your Emmaus? The place you go to in that moment of despair?

Now, where are the experiences in your own life when parts of your faith dropped from here (*head*) to here (*heart*)? When your eyes were opened because someone

welcomed you or you welcomed them? When someone opened up your heart, your door, your life to a stranger, to someone you didn't expect to be a blessing?

What is it that keeps us from seeing with our hearts? From seeing the Christ that stands right in front of us, the resurrected Christ in our children, our barista, our neighbour, our spouse?

Maybe it has to do with expectations. We might expect to brush close with the holy in church, and maybe that's why we often do. I know that even in church I have been caught off guard by a spiritual experience – the first time I partook in communion when I knew that I was pregnant with my first child, I was struck with this knowing that God already had a relationship with this teeny person in there, and that I would be part of it, but that unique and separate bond was already formed.

So if we can bump into God in a place where we come to intentionally seek God out, and still be surprised, I wonder what life would be like if we always expected to encounter God, new life, the risen Jesus?

One of the cool things that I noticed about all of these stories, is that in their AHA moments, Jesus brings them into the present moment. For that snapshot, they are fully present, two feet on the ground, in reality. And it is in that presence that they are able to experience *the* presence. The name, 'Mary', the touching of the hand, the serving, the present moment allowed God to be fully revealed to these folks. I would suggest that the same is true for us as well.

How can we make space for the holy in our everyday? We can start by expecting to meet Jesus all over! Where are our minds closed to experiencing that? Because, you know, that's probably where he's going to be!

So as we open ourselves to that encounter and receive that aha, that moment of spirit/heart/God awareness, we can also expect that, like the folks in the story, we then become a part of it. Remember, they *understood* and leapt right into action.

Stongs concordance defines Grace as the divine influence on the heart and its reflection in the life. Divine influence on the heart and its reflection in the life. We are present, we experience God, and it flows out.

When I started, I reflected that the last three weeks we have had a chance to peek at three ways that we can encounter the risen Christ, all pretty different but with the common thread of not recognizing when we are looking right in his face. Now, we have these unnamed disciples or these other folks in so many of these stories – this is no accident. These folks are us. These unnamed are scriptural opportunities to

place ourselves into the stories, to identify with the deep resonant human truths that the stories convey. I would encourage you to pay attention to that as you pick up your Bible and read a story, as you listen on Sunday mornings. Notice that invitation to dive fully in.

Now, I cannot leave today's story without a word around hospitality. We can hang out with folks from church, talk about what is going on for them, for us, discuss scripture, BUT, it is in the sitting down, the sharing of a meal, where we encounter God. Because hospitality isn't friendliness. Hospitality is generosity and justice embodied.

After all, we call Jesus our companion on the road of life, and the roots of the word companion are bread and with!

So may we all see the face of the risen Christ in each person we encounter – yes, even in the seat right beside you! Even the guy who cut you off on the highway this morning, the person who parked in the handicapped parking spot with no sign, the woman you saw in the alley passed out with a needle in her arm. May we have the courage to see the risen Christ, trusting, knowing that they are a child of God, and treating them with the value that consideration holds.

May it be so.  
Amen