

Easter 3A
 April 26, 2020
 Rev. Ken Wratten at St. Luke's
 Acts 2:14a, 36-47
 Psalm 116
 1 Peter 1:17-23
 Luke 24:13-35

Two followers of Jesus were headed the wrong way! The road they were on was headed west from Jerusalem. They were not back in the city with the other followers of Jesus. They were headed home. It was all over. It was finished. It was time to go home and to get back to where they left off three years ago. It was time for things to get back to “normal”. WRONG!

They could never go back: just like you and I can never go back to our youth, or to the time before we chose our Christian faith. There was no return for them to the old normal, to the life before they met Jesus. There would now be a new normal. They had heard the words Jesus used; Son of Man, Son of God, the shepherd, the light, the Way. Life could never be the same again. Peter said it in his letter: “You have been born anew”. The old is gone, forever. They just didn’t know that yet, and they were headed home.

When you and I feel defeated, when we are discouraged, embarrassed, wounded physically or emotionally, we want to retreat into ourselves. But here we are in isolation in our homes. How is it working ... to be in retreat into ourselves, alone?

Emmaus is on the way to ‘nowhere’. Emmaus was 7 miles west of Jerusalem, toward the Mediterranean Sea. Jesus wasn’t on his way to Jerusalem, or to Galilee, or anywhere. **He was after these two followers, who forgot to hope, who forgot the feeling that comes with having faith.**

Jesus was there to show them the same thing that you and I need to know. **They couldn’t recognize that Jesus was standing right beside them:** Just like there are times in our lives that we want with all our hearts to see Jesus standing next to us, we want to feel him guiding us through our pain, our confusion, our loneliness, or just through our questions (why is this happening, Lord). This stranger they met used Scriptures to show them that what happened to him had been part of God’s plan since the time of Abraham. And their “hearts were burning” because they felt new pieces of the puzzle of life fitting together. By re-hearing the OT stories through the lens of Jesus’ life, events fit together like never before, into a flow of intentional planning by God, all culminating in Jesus living, and teaching, and dying, and being resurrected and ascended FOR THEM and FOR US.

First the two followers of Jesus needed to hear Scripture anew, to see God’s plan unfolding. And then, Jesus’ identity was revealed to them in the Breaking of Bread – just like you and I remember Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, as we gather together in community. He showed them the roles of Scripture and Sacrament.

Let me talk with you about Sacrament... Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation, Ordination, Marriage, Reconciliation, Unction of the Sick. millions of sacraments... visible sign pointing to spiritual grace... What experience have you witnessed that made you feel close to God... (the sacrifice of nurses and doctors). Sacrament. What experience have you had that made you feel close to God? (both daughters have sent us face masks). Sacrament.

The concept of Jesus being alive again was such a surprise that they weren't ready to accept. His Resurrection still, today, catches people by surprise. In spite of 2000 years of evidence of Jesus being with us and doing work through us, people are caught by surprise at the notion that Jesus is alive and at work. But the way they experience Jesus at work in the world is through You and Me walking the walk... letting our light shine. As we take on the character of Jesus, God's love is visible to the world. As you live your life, and make decisions, and discern right from wrong to meet what Jesus taught was God's will, other people see Jesus at work - and they get to know God better.

Jesus took his time to explain to Cleopas and his friend why the events of Good Friday through Easter had to happen. Now why would Jesus pick these two men, who were already on their way home, to explain all of these events? I think he chose them because they had separated from the rest of their community. Once they understood the deeper meaning of what had happened, and how the pieces fit together, the first thing they did was to run the 7 miles back to Jerusalem to be back in community with their friends. That is where they belonged; and that is where you and I belong.

Our being in community isn't just for the great times, the spiritual highs, when everything is going perfectly, and when we are in this beautiful and historic chapel together. This faith family is family for the other times, too. We are on the life-journey of learning how to trust each other, and to honor each other, to be there for each other; **when we just can't see Jesus standing next to us, and when we have lost our hope and our faith.**

Jesus knows those times happen; he wants to bring us reassurance and comfort and hope and renewed faith.

So we have Scripture, the concept of a sacramental life, and each other. And through these gifts we can feel renewed hope and renewed faith when we thought we had been left alone. The two followers on the road to Emmaus got the lesson of a lifetime from the teacher of the Ages, and we get to learn from the crash course they were given.

Jesus is right here with us, through what each of us is going through.
Jesus is risen. He has made known to us who he was and who he is now.
Hold onto that fact,
and hold onto each other.