

READY FOR A WALK (HAND IN HAND)

Luke 24:13-43

Intro

For the last few weeks, at Men's Group we have been reading through the events of Holy Week as they are written in the Gospel of Luke. This past Thursday morning we finally got to Luke's account of the resurrection which leaves us with the disciples thinking that what the women have seen (an empty tomb and two angels declaring that Jesus has been raised) as nothing more than an idle tale that they did not believe, with Peter going to look for himself walking away 'amazed' at what had happened (we are not told that he believes).

But wait, there's more! The way that Luke describes Easter then shoots us a few hours forward into that same day, where we meet two followers of Jesus on the road to Emmaus. One is named Cleopas while we never are told the name of the other.

As we read through that story and then what transpired later that night I was struck by all the ways that Jesus is able to appear in the lives of the people who know him...and all of the ways that they still are unable to believe.

We are the disciples and the disciples are us.

How often do we go through our days, coming into the presence of the Son of Man, and yet we still wonder if what we are feeling is really true? We end up doubting, even as we profess our belief.

So, who's ready for a walk? The scripture reads this way.

Luke 24:13-43

13 Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' ¹⁹He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.' ²⁵Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

28 As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now

nearly over.’ So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?’ ³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, ‘The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!’ ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

36 While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ ³⁷They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸He said to them, ‘Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.’ ⁴⁰And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, ‘Have you anything here to eat?’ ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he took it and ate in their presence.

‘Ready for a Walk (Hand in Hand)’

One of the wonderful things about reading through the Bible verse by verse is that you pick up on things that you didn’t realize were there.

Prior to the reading I mentioned how after not believing the women who said that they had been told by angels that Jesus had been raised, Peter went to see for himself.

Pop quiz moment: according to Luke (because all the Gospels offer different retellings), but according to Luke, did Peter go to the tomb by himself?

Ding! Ding! Ding!

The answer is no, that Peter did not go alone! That Cleopas (and some unnamed others as well!), were with him.

And now Cleopas, and another follower, are getting out of Jerusalem and heading to Emmaus. Kind of puts a different spin on when we are told that Peter comes back from the tomb ‘amazed at what had happened’.

We are the disciples and the disciples are us.

Cleopas, even though we don’t know him, is a disciple of Jesus. He has been close enough to Jesus that he hears from the women when they return and is with Peter when they head to see for themselves...you know, even though they think that what the women have told them is little more than an idle tale.

And now Cleopas is out.

Why do you think that is? Put yourself in his shoes, why would you be on that road? Maybe he’s running trying to get out of Dodge before the authorities come knocking on their door demanding to know where Jesus’ body is. Maybe he’s headed back home, trying to get back to the comfortable and safe confines of that which is known. Maybe he’s running an errand. We don’t know.

But whatever the reason, what he and his friend carry with them emotionally reminds us that this walk of faith that we have been invited to take by the Creator of all, is not the smoothest of paths.

Now that sentiment can very much be derived just by reading and remembering the walk to and then from Emmaus.

But when you keep reading, all of a sudden you realize just how difficult it can be to live out a life of faith when the world keeps coming at you, wave after wave after exhausting wave.

The disciples, Cleopas included, are awake at what feels like must be going into the middle of the night and they're sharing their respective Jesus sighting stories (can you see the women in the space just looking at the men, saying, 'we told you that yesterday! Get with it!!' Love that visual.).

Anyway, they're sharing stories when Jesus shows up.

They're sharing stories about a resurrected Jesus when the resurrected Jesus appears...and they think that they are seeing a ghost. We have what then sounds an awful lot like the doubting Thomas story ('look at my hands and my feet') and even though they are joyful, they are still in a state of disbelief.

Faith and doubt (brought on by our human perspective of the world) existing side by side, even hand in hand.

We are the disciples and the disciples are us.

We believe and yet, when the world happens (when school shootings take place in North Carolina and Colorado, when racial bias, fear, and bigotry rear its head again and again, when we get the diagnosis) we look around thinking, 'where are you God? Did I get this whole 'belief' thing wrong somewhere along the line?'

Think about it, we have over 2000 years of examples of how Jesus is still at work in the world, still at work in the lives around us, still at work in our lives, and when stuff hits the fan in the here and now, we doubt.

Just like Peter. Just like Cleopas. Just like all the unnamed people who are there in the space with all the individuals whose names we do know. So...I guess we're in good company?

Well, that may be...but that does not mean that that we should become comfortable with that reality...especially when we also remember that the very people who were standing there with the resurrected Jesus (and were doubting!), ultimately became the hands, feet, and voice of Jesus in the world. That certainly doesn't mean that they never had moments of confusion and doubt (as we look into the Acts of the Apostles, we can absolutely encounter multiple examples of not being sure what the God thing to do is – do we trust Saul, now called Paul; is this food really ok to eat?), but those moments did not become defining characteristic of their life in the world: their trust in Jesus did.

How did they make that transition?

By being intentional in their connection to the Almighty through worship, prayer, and service. And by being in relationship with one another.

Look, you want to become more faithful in your living? Then be intentional about doing those things that bring glory to God! Because the world is never going to let up with the onslaught of events that will cause us to doubt and if you are not intentional in turning your gaze back to Jesus you will ultimately see the junk in the world and that's what you will react and respond to.

Cleopas heard and then saw that that the tomb was empty (just as Jesus said was going to happen – and were not even going to get into the fact that all the women came back and told them that they were told by angels that Jesus had been raised from the dead – come on guys: listen to the women in your lives!), but none of that mattered, because in those moments, Cleopas and the other named disciples that we know from scripture, were not being intentional about bringing glory to God.

Instead, they were grieving, fearful, and sure that what they had seen was the end of the story.

And these are the people who saw Jesus turn water into wine, walk on water, feed the 5000, raise Lazarus from the dead...do you get where I'm going here?

If they were drawn into that place of doubt and they had experienced so much (even to the point that the resurrected Jesus is standing there in front of them!), how much easier will it be for us?

Do you want to be more responsive to this faith, to this belief in Jesus that you that you know you have?

Then be more intentional about bringing glory to God through worship, prayer, and service, and yes, by being in relationship with one another. Jesus is with us! Right now, Jesus is with us! And we can begin to realize that this is true when we intentionally bring glory to God.

Which means that it's time to start doing it; we need to be intentional in walking out our faith into our lives.

For example, throughout the season of Lent, we dove into the book Rediscover Jesus which provided more than a few examples of how to be intentionally faithful. How are you doing with those faithful disciplines?

Or as the case may be, how are you doing with the faithful disciplines that you felt drawn to in response to that book...even though the things that you embraced weren't specifically mentioned?

If you are feeling like you want to look at your shoe tops because you've already stepped away from that path...Jesus is ready and waiting to start walking with you again...and yes, for the first time as well. Allow your eyes to be opened and have your hearts burn by being intentional in your connection to the Savior of all through worship, prayer, and service, by being in relationship with one another.

How about now? You ready for a walk? Be intentional about it and when we recognize those moments when you start to step away, know that Jesus is right there with you, ready to encourage and show you just how true these promises of God have always been, and always will be. Walk with Jesus. Make the decision and intentionally walk with Jesus: Jesus is waiting!

After Sermon Prayer

Holy God, even in our doubt, You are ready to walk with us. Help us to believe this truth and lead us to make the choice every minute of every hour of every day to intentionally walk with You, revealing all that it means to live a life of faith. It is in Jesus' name that we do pray. Amen.