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Luke 24:13-35  
April 30, 2017

**"I Wonder What Exciting Thing is Going to Happen Today?"**

A young preacher got up in the pulpit one Sunday preparing to start his sermon. He had heard one of his professors from seminary begin one of his sermons:

"The happiest days of my life were spent in the arms of another man's wife ... my mother."

The young preacher thought the quotation would add drama and force to his sermon, so he tried it.

He said, "The happiest days of my life were spent in the arms of another man's wife."

At this point he had a mental block. He was confused. He was bewildered.

He agonized for a moment ... and then said, "The happiest days of my life were spent in the arms of another man's wife. But, for the life of me, I can't remember who it was."

Just as that young preacher was confused; so were the two men walking along the Emmaus Road in our scripture text for this morning.

You remember the story. Two travelers. Were they friends? Brothers? Husband and wife? We're not told. Just Cleopas and whomever.

They were church going folks, just like us, in Jerusalem for the Passover and also to be near Jesus, whom they were sure was Israel's deliverer, the Messiah.

Now they were going home. Dejected, depressed, defeated. Jesus had been crucified. He was dead and buried. There was nothing more to say or do.

As they walked, they talked. Probably some about mundane things - taxes too high, wages too low, kids too wild - but more than likely, about their friend, Jesus.

His teaching, his healing, the way he seemed to love everyone he met, and about the events of the past week.

Suddenly, Cleopas and friend are not alone. Someone is walking along with them.

"Wha's up, y'all?" (I said that so DeLynn could relate!)

They stop dead in their tracks. "Wha's up? Wha's UP??? Are you kidding me?"

As the text puts it, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have happened there in these days?"

Of course, we're privy to a bit of information those two disciples are not.

As we listen, we discover that this stranger is none other than the risen Christ, himself.

I don't know about you, but it does seem rather peculiar that these two have no clue as to who this stranger is.

As two of Jesus' disciples, they should have recognized him.

But, verse 16 says, "...their eyes were kept from recognizing him."

How did that happen?

Maybe, God put blinders on them through some sort of special miracle. He certainly has the power to do that.

Maybe they had poor vision, in an age without glasses. There had to be lots of people back then with vision like mine.

Without these glasses, no way I read the words on this page. And I'm using 14 point type!

Or, maybe they didn't recognize Jesus because he was out of context. I mean he is supposed to be dead and buried.

Maybe he was in a disguise – funny wig, sunglasses, and a fake beard.

Whatever the reason, the result is the same. They are clueless. Jesus walks with them and even teaches them.

"Remember what you learned in Sunday School? Remember the Bible stories? Remember God's promises?"

And then, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explains to them what was said in the scriptures concerning himself.

And as he talks, something begins to warm their hearts. Eventually they all arrive in Emmaus.

The sun is beginning to set, so these two disciples (still not understanding that they were talking to Jesus) invite him to stay and join them for dinner.

Now in the Jewish home, the host, the man of the house, would take the bread and break it and bless it and pass it around the table.

But this night, Jesus did that. He was the guest in this house, but interestingly, he acted as the host.

Luke says: "When (Jesus) was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them."

You recognize those words, don't you? They are a lot like the words we use to observe the Lord's Supper.

They describe what Jesus did at the first Lord's Supper. He took the bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to the disciples.

But listen to what Luke says next. He says: "Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him."

And then Jesus vanished from their sight.

Then, even though it is getting late and it is seven miles back to Jerusalem, these two disciples get up from their dinner table and walk back to the city and tell the other disciples what they had seen.

Pretty remarkable story!

So, let me ask you, are there any parallels between the experience of the followers on the road to Emmaus and our lives? Of course, or there wouldn't be a sermon here.

I am reminded of a story that concerns a cobbler named Conrad. Conrad makes shoes for the people of his village.

Well, one winter's day, two neighbors come to Conrad's shop to find Conrad in high spirits, with his shop decorated with boughs of green.

Conrad explains that the Lord appeared to him in a dream and told him he was to visit him that day.

I'm not sure if Conrad's neighbors believe him or not, but they stay awhile, and then leave.

Conrad then waits for Jesus to appear. What a day! Just imagine! He might even break bread with the risen Lord!

While he is waiting, Conrad sees a beggar walking by with no shoes to protect his feet from the cold. So he goes to his shelf and finds a pair of shoes for the poor man's feet.

The beggar leaves, and later Conrad sees an old woman whose back is bent under a heavy load.

Moved with compassion, Conrad invites the woman in and shares his bread with her — the bread he had been saving for Jesus. After she has eaten, she too goes on her way.

Then Conrad sees a little child, lost and alone. He brings the child inside and gives her a cup of milk. Then he helps the child to find her home and into her mother's waiting arms.

Conrad returns to his shop, where he waits, and waits, and waits.

Finally, as the sun begins to set, he sadly prays: "Jesus, I've been ready for your visit, did you forget me?"

To which Jesus replies, "Conrad, I've kept my word. Three times I came to your door.

"Once as a beggar, once as an old woman, and once as a young child. And three times you greeted me with compassion. Bless you."

And Conrad smiled.

Like the disciples at Emmaus, he walked with the risen Lord without even knowing it.

And, like them, at the end his eyes were opened — and his heart was warmed.

The last thing Cleopas and his companion expected to see on the dusty road to Emmaus was Jesus.

They were not prepared for the Christ of the commonplace.

I am sure that if the two disciples on the road to Emmaus had failed to show hospitality to Jesus, if they had failed to insist that he stay with them, they would have missed a great blessing.

They would have eaten dinner that night in silence. They would have gone to bed wondering what to think.

But that isn't what happened. They showed kindness to this stranger.

They invited him to have dinner with them, to stay overnight, to enjoy the pleasure of their company, instead of a lonely night alongside the road.

And it was at dinner that their eyes were opened.

On any given Sunday morning in contemporary America, modern versions of Cleopas come walking down the road, finally turning in and entering the church.

The powerful and powerless, the bosses and employees, the highest and the lowest, each with their own problems, each yearning for the presence of the risen Lord ... and occasionally finding him here.

But like the two disciples, there is the danger that, once they leave this hallowed place, they are too preoccupied, too busy, too stressed out, to actually recognize him out there as well.

Isn't that sad? Because the truth is, the risen Lord is wherever he is needed, even with us, and even if we do not always know it.

I wonder, is the problem that we simply have left Jesus in the tomb?

I'll just bet that many who participated in Faith In Action this weekend didn't have that problem. Jesus became visible in the faces of those they helped.

And did you notice in the story that Jesus comes to the disciples, not the other way around?

We need to hear this word about the Christ who comes to us. Often we think we must pound on Heaven's door to get God's attention.

"If I just pray often enough, if I get on my knees, if I clean up my life, if I serve the church, than maybe God will notice my situation, maybe then God will open the door."

But the picture the New Testament gives us is not of our pounding on God's door, but of Christ gently knocking on ours.

We are the ones with an attention problem. Christ continually comes to us, but like those two disciples on the road to Emmaus, we do not recognize him.

Author Nelson Searcy tells of visiting *Disney World* with his son some years ago. It was a magical time for them.

What they did not realize until it was time to leave the theme park is that the people who first designed the Disney theme parks did something quite creative.

They hid discreet images of Mickey Mouse throughout all the Disney parks and various attractions.

The images are simple three connected, intersecting circles that look like the outline of Mickey's head and ears and they are everywhere.



They are etched into pavement, painted on the walls of rides, built into the fences, and arranged in the landscaping.

Look for them the next time you are in a Disney park.

Disney World is apparently jam-packed with these subtle Hidden Mickeys, but most people don't see them because they don't know to look for them.

Searcy and his son sure didn't. They learned about the Hidden Mickeys just as they were leaving.

However, simple awareness is a powerful thing.

When Searcy and his son said their final good-bye to Dumbo, after learning about these Hidden Mickeys, and headed toward the parking lot tram, they started seeing hidden Mickeys everywhere.

They began popping out of the woodwork, literally.

They had been at the park all day without seeing a single Hidden Mickey, but as soon as they became aware of their existence, they realized they had been surrounded by them all along.

Maybe all we need to do is open our eyes.

In Winnie the Pooh, Pooh and Piglet take an evening walk. For a long time they walk in silence. Silence like only best friends can share.

Finally Piglet breaks the silence and asks, "When you wake up in the morning, Pooh, what's the first thing you say to yourself?"

“What’s for breakfast?” answers Pooh and then asks. “And what do you say, Piglet?”

Piglet says, “I say, I wonder what exciting thing is going to happen today?”

You and I can’t really plan to meet the Risen Christ because we never really know when or where He’s going to show up.

But you can be sure of this, He will show up. If you believe, He will show up. And the attitude you need to meet him is the attitude of Piglet.

“I wonder what exciting thing is going to happen today?” Or better yet, “I wonder where I’ll meet Jesus today?”

We never know when or where or how Jesus will show up. But we do know this: He is alive, and He wants to live in the hearts of His disciples (that’s us).

As you walk along the road, talking about all the things that have come to pass - participating, in other words, in the business of living, you just may glimpse, out of the corner of your eye, a stranger overtaking you.

At first you may not recognize him; but then you will sense a growing warmth, as your heart begins to burn within you.

And then comes the moment, magnificent and unexpected, when you see who it is.

So, keep an eye out for Jesus. You can see him today in the faces of these, your fellow worshipers.

Or you might get a glimpse of him in your husband or wife — or one of your children.

Or your neighbor. Or the clerk at the supermarket.

Once you expect to see Jesus, you will begin to see him everywhere.

Oh ... and don't forget to look in the mirror. You'll see a bit of him there too.

*Amen!*