



We will be Found! Luke 24:13-35
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Today, we continue in our journey from Easter and the resurrection to the road to Emmaus. This reading is one of my absolute favorites in the bible. When I feel lost, I read this story. When I feel heartbroken, I read this story. When I need to be found, I read this story.

So what is this story about? Luke's story of the walk to Emmaus is the second series of events in his Gospel to occur on the day of Christ's resurrection. It is still Sunday! Earlier in the day, the women had seen the empty tomb, they had the vision of the two men in dazzling clothes, they had reported to the apostles and then Peter had run to the empty tomb and 'been amazed.

This Luke story will have Jesus' dramatic first entrance post resurrection. But Jesus will not appear to Peter or to Mary Magdalene or anyone important or anyone for that matter who we've heard of before. And Jesus won't appear in Jerusalem or at the tomb or in Galilee. Jesus will appear to two unknown disciples, on a dusty out of the way road to Emmaus.

The two disciples walking to Emmaus were amazed at the story they had heard about Jesus appearing to the women at the tomb but apparently not at all convinced by the women's story. The two knew all that had occurred that very morning in Jerusalem, but they were still walking away, sad and downcast, talking amongst themselves, seemingly heart-broken refugees, running from all that had happened in Jerusalem. They were lost.

The world of these two disciples had been turned upside down by the life and teachings of Jesus. And then, the world of the disciples had been turned upside down by his death. And then, the world of these two lost disciples had been turned upside down by the stories that have sprung up, about his rising from the dead. And so, they walked away.

And on the road away from Jerusalem, these two meet a fellow journeyer. Luke tells us that it is Jesus though the two disciples are so lost in their grief that they don't recognize Jesus. Jesus engages them and draws out their story of lostness and pain. And the two disciples talk about their disappointment, their feelings of despair about the events of the past two days. The two are seemingly shocked that their fellow traveler appears to be unaware of the recent events in Jerusalem. They share the details of the past days with an almost touching naiveté.

In the course of their sharing of what happened in Jerusalem that set them on that road, the disciples share what are perhaps the saddest words in the New Testament. Those words are, 'we had hoped'. 'We had hoped...' These two disciples, they had hoped that Jesus was the one, the one to save them, the one to deliver them, the one to be their king, their deliverer, their messiah. They had hoped. But at that moment, on that road, all they see is the crucifixion, the end.

Those words have sat with me deeply. 'We had hoped'. They make me think of our recent strange times when the news, or my own life, has unfolded in ways that shook the foundations of what I believed in, what I counted on, what I hoped.

These times we are in now have dashed many a hope. I'll tell you that I had hoped to worship in person this Easter. I had hoped to celebrate my Installation service with you all in March. My seventeen-year-old had hoped to go to Senior Prom and to walk the stage at her high school graduation. My nineteen-year-old had hoped to spend her second year of college with friends and her community. My spouse had hoped to show up to teach each day, helping second graders learn math and reading and all those critical lessons that elementary kids need and want.

Two weeks ago, I was asked to provide pastoral care to someone dying from the corona virus. I had hoped to be there with her as she was dying, to offer comfort through words and touch. Instead, I was on the phone with her, separate. Her family member had hoped to be there with her at the end, but instead on the day she died, she was alone. Her family had hoped to gather together her community, to honor, to tell stories, to grieve surrounded by embraces, tears and comfort. They had hoped.

And not just those hopes but hopes like, we had hoped the virus wasn't real, that over 3,500,000 people worldwide wouldn't be infected with it. We had hoped that close to 250,000 people wouldn't die. We had hoped. Just like those disciples on the way to Emmaus, we had hoped. A lot of dashed hopes dashed hopes and disappointments over these past few weeks.

The disciples walking away from Jerusalem say to Jesus, 'we had hoped.' All they see at that moment is the crucifixion. All they see at that moment is the end. Until they come to the village where they will be staying for the night and they invite Jesus to stay with them. And over the evening meal, Jesus took the bread, blessed it and broke it and gave it to them. And in that moment, they knew. They knew that what they had hoped for had not come to reality but instead something else was breaking forth. Something was calling them back to their community, to their God. They knew that they were not alone. They knew that they were found. They knew presence.

I told you that when I feel lost, I read this story. When I feel heartbroken, I read this story. When I need to be found, I read this story. In all those times, I have turned to this story because this story invites me to step out my brokenness. This story invites me to stop and to be aware and to be awake. This story invites me to ask myself where I have been overlooking God in my own story.

So many times, I have been like these disciples, sad, frustrated, angry, confused and disappointed and asking where is God in all of this? Just like those disciples running from Jerusalem feeling like so much has been lost, so many hopes not fulfilled. It is on that road, that I turn to this story because this story, this story is all about God being right in front of us, with us, right now.

This story is about asking, 'where is God in our lives right now? That answer may be the doctors and nurses on the front line, the grocery clerks or the food banks feeding our hungry neighbors. That answer may be art or music or dance or silence. That answer may be connecting with community or our loved ones in new and different ways. Or that answer may be through being of service to our neighbors in need.

The invitation that this story offers is to **not** overlook God right in front of us, even during these times, maybe especially during these times. The disciples at the end of this story do the quintessential face palm of 'how could we not have known!' God was right here, with us, all this time.

This is my favorite New Testament story because it reminds us to be open to our own Emmaus wherever it may be during these strange times. This is my favorite New Testament story because it reminds us that no matter what road we are traveling, we are not on that journey alone. This is my favorite New Testament story because it reminds us to stop asking what God's plan is and instead to look for God's presence on the road with us, even in the hard times, especially in the hard times.

This is my favorite New Testament story because it reminds us that we will be found, we will always be found. Regardless of what comes or happens, God remains, God is present. We will be found.

And that dear ones, that is indeed good news. We will be found.

Amen