

Luke 24:13-35

¹³ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

¹⁷ And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then 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?" ¹⁹ He 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, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ But 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. ²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³ and 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. ²⁴ Some 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."

²⁵ Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" ²⁷ Then 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. ²⁹ But 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.

³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

³² They 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?" ³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together.

³⁴ They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Luke 24:13-35, 2017

This weekend we have a text from the gospel of Luke and one from the book of Acts,

books written by the same author that tell the story of faith from the times of Jesus' days of ministry, alive in this world,

and then times after his resurrection,

the work of the Apostles and the beginning of the church.

These two accounts today are not just stories that describe the events of Jesus' followers after his resurrection,

they have deep theological meaning for us today, and at the same time have deep relevance for our lives today.

If we take the stories together what is revealed is a picture of life formed, informed, strengthened and nurtured by Christ's presence,

and that presence we find in Holy Baptism and Holy Communion.

If we look at the two passages side by side we discover that in

ACTS

We have baptism and the H.S. received by the people

Peter and the disciples speak to those blind to Jesus who crucified him

Luke

Eucharist at the table given to the travelers

Jesus blinding travelers to his ID

The Apostles share Christ's
promise of a future for you,
your children all who are
called, for all time

Jesus opens the past, the
scriptures, to them

the people are cut to the heart
by the Apostle's words

the travelers hearts burn
with longing and they
invite this stranger to
stay with them

the people are baptized and
receive the Holy Spirit

the travelers eyes are
opened and they
recognize Jesus in his
taking, blessing,
breaking and giving the
bread.

The theological timeline of Luke-Acts provides an interpretive
framework for understanding the relationship between Jesus and
the Holy Spirit that is reciprocal,

Jesus rises and ascends and the Spirit is poured out;

It also describes the movement from "discipleship of
followers who are all equal in Jesus' eyes" physically
gathered around Jesus

to the larger church and how witness is sustained by
baptism and the Eucharist, as they are celebrated in the
community even now.

The time for gathering around the physical presence of Jesus passes and gathering around him in water, bread and wine begins.

The encounter of these two bewildered and disconsolate pilgrims on their way home with Jesus

shines a light on the theology of the resurrection,
 the nature of faith sustained by the Holy Spirit,
 the promise of Eucharist through hospitality
 and the necessity of communal practice and living.

What Jesus' resurrection means for us is that

- our faith is sustained by the Holy Spirit poured out for us and into us because Jesus died and was raised again,
- our sharing the bread in hospitality with others,
 - with those who regularly come here,
 - those who come here seasonally,
 - those who come here searching,
 - those who come here hurting and in need of healing,
 - those who come here bewildered, doubting and disconsolate like the travelers in our gospel story
- opens the opportunity for us all to recognize Jesus in the taking, blessing, breaking and giving the bread.
- and shows us that living in a community of faith, a community in which love is shared and care is given
 - is a necessary part of our lives because no one can do this alone.

The promise of this text is that Jesus will meet each of you, and us all as community in the breaking of the bread,

and the hospitality we show will become the door way to grace,

for the stranger who enters this space and that will be a sign of trust and hope for us all.

At the same time there is this sense of continuity and discontinuity in being a follower of Jesus.

There is familiarity and mystery.

There is recognition and confusion

How do you deal with believing without seeing, trusting without knowing?

The disciples, the two travelers, experienced the mystery of this stranger who joined them of the road and then when Jesus broke the bread they not only recognized him,

their vision, their interpretation, their understanding of the time they spent walking with him changed, it cleared,

Oh yeah, that is what that burning in our hearts was. It was Jesus.

Part of the discontinuity is not being able to sit with him as the disciples did.

A part of that is how you may experience his presence and absence,

and the many ways we experience his presence and absence communally.

But the largest part is that we have to live by faith, not by sight.

This story of Cleopas and his friend speaks to this issue.

How do you live in faith?

Faith does not count on proof, otherwise it would not be faith.

But, faith needs to be based on something.

For the travelers it was the Old Testament scriptures as Jesus opened them up for them.

Perhaps it was the meals they remembered having with Jesus during the time they were following him;

perhaps the Lord's Supper on the night he was betrayed,

and then finally the breaking of the bread.

Whatever it was that made them invite Jesus to stay with them, they experienced a Christophany, an appearance of Christ.

Memory can prompt faith and hope.

Do you remember a particular moment in your life when the awful thing you were experiencing felt familiar and you could remember the Christophany you experienced that got you through that time before,

that strengthened your faith,

that enabled you to trust that God was with you, on your side, had your life, your situation in hand?

I remember those moments.

It is those moments, those memories that get me through some times.

Luke provides us with a key bridge to understanding divine presence as seeming "absence."

Christ vanishes from sight for these two travelers. This is not the only time he has vanished.

This is our reminder that visible apprehension of Jesus could not sustain your faith.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit, that is the key.

In the gospel of Luke the role of the Holy Spirit has been proclaimed.

The one conceived by the Holy Spirit would baptize in the Holy Spirit.

The hope of Pentecost was that the Holy Spirit would come upon the disciples and in the Spirit they would recognize the holy presence in the absence of Jesus.

Now the presence of the Holy Spirit makes the absence of Jesus bearable.

I see the Holy Spirit work here.

I see the Holy Spirit work among you, in you, through you as we carry our ministry together,

As I talk with you and you are healed,

As we worship together,

You, we, have been transformed and that will continue as Christ is with us in the work and power of the Holy Spirit.

I have seen the Holy Spirit work in Susan since we began to discuss call discernment last September.

I have witnessed the work of the Holy Spirit in her discernment of call that has led her to a decision to seek other vocational opportunity.

It is the Spirit who gives her insight, strength and courage to follow wherever God may be calling her.

It is the Spirit who gives her faith in the resurrected Christ in the absence of sight.

I want to, and want all of us to honor and respect that in her,

and join her in her walk in the remaining time she has with us.

For her it will be a walk in which she may be blinded to the future and filled with anxiety, maybe blinded to the presence of Christ from time to time,

except as we may make him present as we walk with her.

This all sets us as a church off on a journey of our own like our two travelers in the gospel story.

What does the future hold for us given Susan's leaving and the loss of our exemption from licensing for our after school program?

We are going to have to do some discernment ourselves.

We might allow ourselves to be the unnamed companion of Cleopas

walking down this road and we will stop sometime and sadly explain to someone what has happened.

We will gather together here and be reminded what the scriptures say about God's faithfulness.

We will gather around this table where bread will be taken, blessed, broken and given.

We will experience our own Christophany along the way. We will see Jesus.

We then will go and tell the others,

Those who need a reminder, those who don't know,

- those who are out there searching,
- those who are hurting and in need of healing,
- those who are bewildered, doubting and disconsolate like the travelers in our gospel story.

We will continue to be the door to God's grace that opens for everyone.