

BUCYRUS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH August 12, 2018

“WALKING PARTNER”

Pastor Mike Corwin

TEXT: LUKE 24:13-35 & MATTHEW 11:28-30

GOD’S WORD: GENESIS 3:8-13

I – EDEN:

I love the passage from Genesis that we read this morning. I know it’s about the fall of man and how we messed up. But it also gives me a glimpse of our God and helps me form my theology. In this early piece of Scripture I see a God who is personal and wants a relationship with his children. Verse 8 tells us how God walked in the garden as the cool evening breeze blew through. He did it to check up on his children, to talk to Adam and Eve.

Up until this point his talks were pleasant. He made sure they wanted for nothing. They had no hang-ups – even with nudity – and they didn’t have a care in the world. They didn’t worry about where their next meal was coming from because God had provided a lush garden with plenty of fruits and vegetables to consume. They didn’t worry about storms because it never rained – everything was watered from underneath at this point. Their health was perfect so there was no need for doctors or hospitals, and they had no need for a therapist. When they walked with God, when they trusted in God, their lives were perfect.

It was on the day that they decided to walk by themselves...to disobey God’s command to not eat the one fruit that their lives took a turn for the worse. When you don’t obey God, when you don’t walk in close fellowship with God, life gets hard. Eve ushered in childbirth labor and Adam ushered in hard work and labor of another kind. And they got kicked out of the garden.

But God did not give up on his people. He still spoke to them through his prophets and we continually read that he told his people of Israel that if they would walk in his ways...walk with him and obey, he would be their God and take care of them. But they didn’t listen either.

II – OUR STORY:

I have to tell you that we have not improved in this area since the story of Eden, or of the Israelites in the desert. God still wants us to walk with him, to talk with him, to obey him...he still wants us to be the loving children he created. But we certainly haven’t found our way back to the garden yet.

Our lives are full of chaos and turmoil. We have pain and suffering. We fight with one another, we live from paycheck to paycheck, and we suffer from addiction to food, nicotine, and alcohol just to name a few. We argue with our spouses or significant others, we aren’t happy at work or at home and take it out on them and our children. We get upset by what we hear on the radio or see on the news. We have no shortage of doctors or therapists now as we deal with all of this and our bodies breaking down with wonderful diseases like cancer, diabetes, hypertension, dementia, and Alzheimer.

It’s at the end of suffering that I see people turn to God and want to be with him. How different would life be if we walked, talked, and obeyed God all the days of our lives...not just the last few. We may still

have problems but we'd see them in a different light. We'd have hope instead of devastation. Just one encounter with Jesus can change our lives forever.

III – TEXT:

I see this played out in this morning's text from the Gospel of Luke. Most people know it as "The Walk to Emmaus." It's a moving story. A testimony to the Resurrection. An explanation of the Empty tomb. But I also see it as a walk of sorrow. Listen to the story again...

Luke 24:13-35 (CEB)

¹³ On that same day, two disciples were traveling to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking to each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were discussing these things, Jesus himself arrived and joined them on their journey. ¹⁶ They were prevented from recognizing him. ¹⁷ He said to them, "What are you talking about as you walk along?" They stopped, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ The one named Cleopas replied, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who is unaware of the things that have taken place there over the last few days?" ¹⁹ He said to them, "What things?" They said to him, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth. Because of his powerful deeds and words, he was recognized by God and all the people as a prophet. ²⁰ But our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him. ²¹ We had hoped he was the one who would redeem Israel. All these things happened three days ago. ²² But there's more: Some women from our group have left us stunned. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ and didn't find his body. They came to us saying that they had even seen a vision of angels who told them he is alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women said. They didn't see him." ²⁵ Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! Your dull minds keep you from believing all that the prophets talked about. ²⁶ Wasn't it necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" ²⁷ Then he interpreted for them the things written about himself in all the scriptures, starting with Moses and going through all the Prophets. ²⁸ When they came to Emmaus, he acted as if he was going on ahead. ²⁹ But they urged him, saying, "Stay with us. It's nearly evening, and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ After he took his seat at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight. ³² They said to each other, "Weren't our hearts on fire when he spoke to us along the road and when he explained the scriptures for us?" ³³ They got up right then and returned to Jerusalem. They found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴ They were saying to each other, "The Lord really has risen! He appeared to Simon!" ³⁵ Then the two disciples described what had happened along the road and how Jesus was made known to them as he broke the bread.

The opening phrase in this passage links the story to the events of Easter. Two of Jesus' followers have just left the city of Jerusalem headed to their home in Emmaus. They have a 7 mile walk ahead of them. And it was not a walk of happiness. They are discussing what they have witnessed and been a part of the last few days.

Imagine! You had been following and listening to the one who said he was the Son of God. The one you thought would be the Messiah to give freedom to your people. You followed him to the Holy city for the Passover celebration and started the week watching him ride into the city to the shouts of praise and celebration as people threw their robes and palm branches down before him and welcomed him as the King of the Jews.

But the week ended on a whole different note. The people loved him but the religious rulers and the people's leaders hated him. They orchestrated his demise. These two men witnessed Jesus being arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. They probably saw him being abused by the religious folks, both physically and verbally. And strangely he didn't defend himself. Then he was turned over to the Romans. The people he was supposed to liberate them from. He was publicly questioned by the local ruler, Pontius Pilate, and again did not defend himself. He was taken to the court yard of the garrison where the soldiers mocked and humiliated him, put thorns in his head, and beat him so severely you could see his bones and muscles through the ripped and torn skin. Then they stood by hopelessly as he was executed in the most humiliating and cruel way he could be...nailed to a cross. And if that weren't enough...his body wasn't even allowed to remain in the grave!

These men were not happy. It tells us they were "downcast." They were gloomy, they were sullen, they were in a state of grief and sorrow. Their leader...their hope for deliverance was murdered before their eyes and their hope dashed. They did not understand it all. They did not yet grasp that they were delivered, that Jesus did what he did for them and all the people, that the empty tomb wasn't a story of grave robbing but one of resurrection.

But look at what Jesus does. He comes along side of them and walks with them. After letting them tell their tale of woe he starts to put salve on their lives. To put the hope they had lost back in. He repeats for them the Scriptures of Moses and the prophets. He points out that what had happened to him was foretold by their own people and was recorded in their Bible. He even explains you can't be selective and just pick out certain Scriptures because you need it all to put it into perspective and to come to an understanding.

But the story of the empty tomb is still inadequate. Without a live Jesus it makes no sense. As was the Jewish custom they took Jesus home with them for the night and set down to have the evening meal with him. It was during this meal, as he broke the bread, that God divinely revealed Jesus to them. It was the piece they needed to understand it all.

- JESUS OPENED THE SCRIPTURES
- JESUS OPENED THEIR MINDS
- JESUS OPENED THEIR EYES

All in that one encounter. But it changed their lives forever.

IV – WALK WITH JESUS:

This is what happens when you walk with Jesus. When you open your heart to the cool healing breeze he brings to the garden of your heart. Your life changes. If you ask him Jesus will come alongside you and be your walking partner for all of life.

- Are you having trouble...Walk with Jesus
- Are you having doubts...Walk with Jesus
- Are you having pain...Walk with Jesus
- Do you have a disease...Walk with Jesus
- Have your loved ones deserted you...Walk with Jesus
- Is your self-esteem at its lowest...Walk with Jesus

- Having thoughts of ending it all...Walk with Jesus
- No matter the darkness...Walk with Jesus and be in the light instead

Jesus himself invited you to do this...

Matthew 11:28-30 (CEB)

²⁸ “Come to me, all you who are struggling hard and carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Put on my yoke, and learn from me. I’m gentle and humble. And you will find rest for yourselves. ³⁰ My yoke is easy to bear, and my burden is light.”

Yoke yourself to Jesus instead of the world and your life will get easier. But don’t just do it when you’re in the darkness. Make it a regular exercise program to walk with Jesus daily and you’ll stay out of the darkness.

V – ONLY TAKES ONCE:

And that part that has always amazed me is it only takes one encounter to set all of this in motion, to change your life forever. You have to walk with him for the rest of your life to live the way he wants you to live. To stay in the light for all of eternity.

As soon as he walked with the men on the way to Emmaus and he touched them they immediately left to spread the news to others. Their hope and joy was restored.

I recently officiated at a funeral for a lady in Galion. She had been in a rest home for a while with dementia and could be a handful. One day her out of state daughter got a call from her and she could tell her life had changed. Another daughter went to visit her and could tell by the look on her face that her life had changed. Through the fog of dementia she told them both the same story. She was in her room and all of a sudden she had a visitor. She said that God had come to see her. That he set down beside her and held her hand and told her that she would be all right. For the next couple of months until her death she was all right. She was walking with Jesus through her darkness. She had been on another road...not to Emmaus but to heaven.

If you haven’t had that encounter yet you need to. I’d be more than happy, as would Pastor Becky to open your heart, mind, and eyes to Jesus and start you on the walk. AMEN

I also have some friends here who will give you a brief introduction to another way to do this. It’s called the walk to Emmaus (introduce).