

“The First Meal”

Text: Luke 24:13-35 NLT

God’s Word: Genesis 3:1-7 NLT

Sunday, April 23, 2023 Rev. Becky Stephens

Luke 24:13-35 NLT

¹³ That same day two of Jesus’ followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them. ¹⁶ But God kept them from recognizing him. ¹⁷ He asked them, “What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?” They stopped short, sadness written across their faces. ¹⁸ Then one of them, Cleopas, replied, “You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn’t heard about all the things that have happened there the last few days.” ¹⁹ “What things?” Jesus asked. “The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth,” they said. “He was a prophet who did powerful miracles, and he was a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people. ²⁰ But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him. ²¹ We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. This all happened three days ago. ²² “Then some women from our group of his followers were at his tomb early this morning, and they came back with an amazing report. ²³ They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive! ²⁴ Some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, his body was gone, just as the women had said.” ²⁵ Then Jesus said to them, “You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. ²⁶ Wasn’t it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?” ²⁷ Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. ²⁸ By this time they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if he were going on, ²⁹ but they begged him, “Stay the night with us, since it is getting late.” So he went home with them. ³⁰ As they sat down to eat, he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them. ³¹ Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared! ³² They said to each other, “Didn’t our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?” ³³ And within the hour they were on their way back to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven disciples and the others who had gathered with them, ³⁴ who said, “The Lord has really risen! He appeared to Peter.” ³⁵ Then the two from Emmaus told their story of how Jesus had appeared to them as they were walking along the road, and how they had recognized him as he was breaking the bread.

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Mary had thought Jesus was a gardener, and now two other disciples think He is a stranger. As these two people--one was named Cleopas (he may have been Jesus' uncle) set out on the Road to Emmaus, they were joined by Jesus.

In his translation of the New Testament, William Barclay translates this text by saying that "they stood with faces twisted with grief." So, the two disciples' faces were "twisted with grief"—as they walked the Road to Emmaus.

When you think about it, we all walk the Road to Emmaus with our faces "twisted with grief" sometimes. Maybe you feel that way today.

One day I got an email from a friend whose 23-year-old daughter was celebrating her birthday that week in prison. He wrote about the sadness he felt for "the loss of our dreams for our daughter. The pain of seeing her in prison. The knowledge that she had made so many mistakes and that he and his wife could not stop them." My friend was walking the Road to Emmaus.

Recently, I received a letter from a man who told me about his 18 months of unemployment and his feelings of discouragement and disappointment. This was his Road to Emmaus. What is your Road to Emmaus?

So, these two disciples, their faces twisted with grief were joined on the road by Jesus. And it's important to note that Jesus came to them as a stranger.

Pastor Adam Hamilton writes, "One afternoon during the week before Easter, I stepped out of my office and noticed George and Vicki standing in the memorial garden located in a courtyard of our church. This was the one year anniversary of their son Travis' death. Travis died in a car accident as he was driving back to college. His ashes are inurned in our memorial garden.

I stopped to visit with George and Vicki, and they said, 'Pastor Adam, you won't believe what happened this morning.'" Hamilton continues, "They told me that when they woke up, they saw something on the front porch of their home. They opened the door and found that 35 of their friends and neighbors had bought dozens upon dozens of red geraniums and had left them there for George and Vicki to find on the morning of the anniversary of their son's death. There were notes of encouragement and a beautiful poem about God's care for their son and the promise that one day they would see him again."

Hamilton writes, "Vicki said to me, 'Adam, you have no idea what this meant to us. We felt God's love and the hope of the Resurrection through our friends and neighbors who remembered our son's death and showered us with love.'"

Jesus Christ had come to George and Vicki on their Emmaus journey. While their faces were still twisted with grief, Jesus came in the form of neighbors and friends and some who never left their names, saying: "We remember. We care. And your son is with God."

Have you ever seen Christ through the actions of others? Have you ever been Christ to someone else?

Remember in Matthew Chapter 25 that Jesus will say at the final judgment, *"whatever you did for the least of these you did for me."* In serving others, we serve and begin to recognize Jesus Christ in the faces of those in need.

Are you serving others? What ministries of this church could you become involved in, in order that you will experience Jesus Christ through loving service? What ministries need to be developed here? What is God calling you to do?

We are told that *"When they came to Emmaus, [Jesus] acted as if he was going on ahead. But they urged him, saying, 'Stay with us. It's nearly evening, and the day is almost over.'"*

It's been said that when Jesus *"acted as if he was going on ahead,"* it was as if Jesus was testing the two disciples to see if they remembered His teaching about welcoming the stranger. They hadn't forgotten, and they urged Him to come in for a meal.

We are told that *"After [Jesus] took his seat at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them."* It was at this point that *"Their eyes were opened and they recognized him..."*

Think of the first meal in the Bible. What was it? It's found in Genesis Chapter 3 and we read it earlier in the service. *"The woman saw that the tree was beautiful with delicious food and that the tree would provide wisdom, so she took some of its fruit and ate it, and also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then they both saw clearly and knew that they were naked."*

And that was the beginning of woes that had come upon the human race. Death itself is traced to that moment of rebellion. We all share in the consequence of that first recorded meal. The whole creation is subject to decay, futility and sorrow because of it.

Now, in Luke Chapter 24, we are told about the first meal of the new creation!!! When Jesus gave them the bread, they discovered that He had indeed risen from the Dead!!! The long curse had finally been broken!!! Death itself has been defeated!!! God's new creation, brimming with life and joy and new possibilities has burst upon the world of decay and sorrow!!! For those who will believe, Jesus' Resurrection has reversed the effects of the Fall!!!

When have your eyes been open to seeing the Resurrected Christ for yourself? In verse 32 we are told that the disciples said to one another, *"Weren't our hearts on fire when he spoke to us along the road and when he explained the scriptures for us?"* And then they were so excited that *"They got up and returned to Jerusalem. They found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying to each other, 'The Lord really has risen!'"*

If we were to read on in Luke Chapter 24 we would find that *"While they were saying these things, Jesus himself stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'"* This wasn't the first

time Jesus had told His disciples not to be afraid or promised them peace. But He could tell that they were terrified, and so, as John's Gospel tells us, Jesus said a second time, "*Peace be with you.*"

And this is exactly what the Resurrected Christ brings to us!! The Resurrected Jesus doesn't promise us wealth or health or prosperity or power...what Jesus promises us is peace. As we trust in Jesus--as we believe that He died and rose again--we don't find riches; we find peace and strength and courage so that we can face life with hope!!!

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ didn't change the circumstances of those first disciples; it changed their perspective on their circumstances. It took those defeated and disillusioned disciples and gave them hope and peace.

And that's what Jesus' Resurrection does for us today. It doesn't remove us from our current circumstances. But it does change how we see them. Through faith in Christ, we are able to face troubles, illness, and tragedy knowing that with God these things will never have the last word. Because, as Paul proclaims in 1 Corinthians 15:54, "*Death has been swallowed up in victory.*"

You may want to kneel at the alter this morning and talk with Jesus, saying something like, "Lord, once more I need You. I offer my life to You. Fill me, forgive me, and heal me, I pray. And help me to love You and follow You."

Like Cleopas and the other disciple, may we see our Crucified and Resurrected Savior not just in the Breaking of the Bread, but in every circumstance.

Amen.