

Willow River Parish—Clear Lake, Deer Park, Forest United Methodist

Luke 24:13-35

On that same day, two disciples were traveling to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking to each other about everything that had happened. While they were discussing these things, Jesus Himself arrived and joined them on their journey. They were prevented from recognizing Him.

He said to them, “What are you talking about as you walk along?” They stopped, their faces downcast.

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?”

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. But our chief priests and our leaders handed Him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified Him. We had hoped He was the one who would redeem Israel. All these things happened three days ago. But there’s more: Some women from our group have left us stunned. They went to the tomb early this morning 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. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women said. They didn’t see Him.”

Then Jesus said to them, “You foolish people! Your dull minds keep you from believing all that the prophets talked about. Wasn’t it necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and then enter into His glory?” Then He interpreted for them the things written about Himself in all the scriptures, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets.

When they came to Emmaus, He 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.” So he went in to stay with them. After he took His seat at the table with them, He took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened and they recognized Him, but he disappeared from their sight. 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?”

They got up right then and returned to Jerusalem. They found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying to each other, “The Lord really has risen! He appeared to Simon!” Then the two disciples described what had happened along the road and how Jesus was made known to them as he broke the bread.

1. Second Sight

Many of us have started to notice things we never have before. You might have seen a mama squirrel protecting her baby. Maybe you’ve met neighbors you never saw before. You take walks and notice new buds, types of trees. You may have found countless new places driving about in the area outside of town.

Maybe we have discovered new things about ourselves—likes and dislikes, and about others around you, especially at places such as the grocery store. Maybe you notice the way people are creating their own style of masks, some colorful, some plain. We notice the way people we never met say hello just to connect with another human being. We notice how food tastes especially good when it's scarcer to get hold of.

We value things more when we pay closer attention to them. Right now, in our world, it's as though COVID-19 has enabled us to take a closer look at everything and everyone differently. For some, it has meant, finding more to critique. For many, however, it has meant finding more to cherish about our communities and relationships. Paying more attention to the little things, realizing that little things matter.

Often as human beings, we can get streamlined into seeing only one way, seeing only certain people, seeing only from one perspective, as though we all wear a certain prescription of glasses for the way we view the world and each other. We all view the world through our own unique "lens." Like any lens, it is selective. It helps us to view things in the way we are used to seeing them.

If you wear glasses or contact lenses, think of how the world looks different when you have them off. You feel you can't see things clearly. For some, you may notice things look fuzzier, or

stranger. Put those glasses back on, and the world comes into focus.

However, one day, you go to the optometrist and discover that you haven't been seeing as well as you thought you were. The doctor changes the lens, and suddenly things come into a sharper view. You notice things you were missing. The world, as you see it, changes.

I think that we can develop a new set of eyes as the years go by in our discipleship, too, a "second sight" that enables us to weather the storms of the world, and see Jesus appearing to us in ways we may have missed before. That second sight too desires a new lens. That lens is the scriptures.

2. Scripture Says

Two disciples were traveling to a village called Emmaus. They were talking about all that had happened in Jerusalem that first Easter weekend. Jesus had been crucified. They had hoped He would be the one who would redeem Israel.

Jesus came along and began walking with them. They were prevented from recognizing Him. He wanted to know what they were talking about, and they told Him. They told Him about what had happened to Jesus, and what their hopes had been.

Jesus taught them everything the scripture said about Him from Moses to the prophets. It took Him the seven mile trip to Emmaus to explain everything.

When they got to Emmaus, they convinced Jesus to stay. He went in to stay. He took His seat at the table, broke the bread, and gave it to them. That is when they recognized Him. And then he disappeared.

They ran to the disciples then and there and told them what they had seen and experienced.

3. The Future

When these two disciples encounter the risen Christ, they do not recognize Him until He breaks bread with them. In that moment they are able to face their fears and claim their future—God’s future. What does it mean to realize that in all the years that have passed, with all the archeology and exploration that has taken place in that region, no one has ever found the location of the village called Emmaus, even though it was only “seven miles” from Jerusalem? Perhaps Emmaus is the place you go when you need to find hope.

4. The Heart

In the greatest movie of all time, “It’s a Wonderful Life” —you remember at the end of the movie, Burt the cop brings Harry home, through the snow storm. The Bailey living room is filled

with friends, there to help George in his time of need. Harry offers a toast—“to my big brother George, the richest man in town.”

Right there—in that moment—we know the truth of that word in our gut. George is the richest man in town—not in money—but because of his many friends, whose lives he has touched, and who have touched his.

What we feel from that movie we also know in our lives. When we hear something that is true and right, we feel it deep down—there is a kind of bodily resonance that occurs. We even respond with the words, “that really moved me.”

Luke refers to this as heart burn: “We not our hearts burning within us while He was talking to us on the road, while He was opening the scriptures to us.”

5. Recognition

Karl Barth, one of the 20th century’s most famous theologians, was on a streetcar one day in Basel, Switzerland, where he lived and lectured. A tourist to the city climbed on the streetcar and sat down next to Barth. The two men started chatting with each other. Barth asked, “Are you new to the city?”

The man said, “Yes.”

Barth asked, "Is there anything you would particularly like to see in this city?"

The man replied, "Yes. I'd love to meet the famous theologian Karl Barth. Do you know him?"

Barth replied, "Well, as a matter of fact, I do. I give him a shave every morning."

The tourist got off the streetcar quite delighted. He went back to his hotel saying to himself, "I met Karl Barth's barber today."

That tourist was in the presence of the very person he most wanted to meet, but even with the most obvious clue, he never realized that the man with whom he was talking was the great man himself.

It reminds me of Mary's reaction on Easter morning. In her grief, she thinks the man she is speaking to is the gardener, It is not, of course. Until He called her name she did not realize that she was speaking with the risen Christ.

Of course, it reminds me of that scene on the road to Emmaus. Two of the disciples walk for a while with the resurrected Jesus, and they, too, had no idea with whom they were conversing.

6. Recognition Stories

In the ancient Greek myth *The Odyssey*, we read the epic tale of Odysseus. He was the valiant warrior who fought so bravely in the Trojan War. According to legend, his homeward journey after that war was interrupted for many years as the gods had decided to test his true mettle through a series of trials. His journeys carried him far and wide as he encountered mythic beasts and lands: the Cyclops and the Siren's voices, among others.

Back at his home, his wife and family presume he must have died en route back from Troy. Finally, the day came when the gods released Odysseus and he arrives back home at last. Instead of simply waltzing through the front door, Odysseus decides that he wants to determine if anything has changed during his long absence. He disguises himself so as to approach his home looking like a stranger in need of temporary lodging.

The housekeeper welcomes the apparent traveler and performs for him the then-standard practice of foot-washing. She tells the stranger stories about her long-lost master, Odysseus, whom she had also served as a nurse when he was young. When Odysseus was a young boy, he was once gored by a wild boar, leaving a nasty scar on his leg. Her hand brushed the old scar and she recognized, with great joy, her beloved friend and master!

Recognition scenes like that have long been a strong pull on the human heart. It happened many times in the TV series "I Love

Lucy” when Lucy would disguise herself so as to worm her way into one of her husband’s shows. You always waited eagerly for that moment when Ricky’s eyes would widen right before He’s exclaim, “Luuuuccy!” Perhaps we can understand those two disciples and their inability to recognize Jesus.

7. His Number

One Sunday a vicar was doing a children’s talk, using a telephone to illustrate the idea of prayer. “You talk to people on the telephone but you don’t see them on the other end of the line, do you?” The children shook their heads. “Well, talking to God is like talking on the telephone. He’s on the other end, but you can’t see Him. He’s listening though.” Just then a little boy piped up and asked, “What’s His number?”

We don’t need a telephone number to get through to God. We just need to know Jesus. He walks beside us by His Spirit. We can talk to Him at any time. He wants us to keep talking. He always listens. He always understands.

8. Seeing Jesus

When do we see Jesus?

We see Jesus in every person we meet. We see Jesus in the world around us.

In this time of isolation, we see Jesus in every person we reach out to. We see Jesus in each person who reaches out to us. As Christians, we are connected to each other through Jesus Christ. It would be natural to see Jesus Christ in each other.

Jesus is in everything we do. As families, isolated together, help each other, we see Jesus. As we reach out to others through cards and calls and volunteering to help, we see Jesus and others see Jesus. Let Jesus work through us so that others can see Jesus through us.