

Gospel: Luke 24:13-35

<sup>13</sup>Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles<sup>[a]</sup> from Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. <sup>15</sup>As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; <sup>16</sup>but they were kept from recognizing him.

<sup>17</sup>He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still; their faces downcast. <sup>18</sup>One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

<sup>19</sup>"What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. <sup>20</sup>The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; <sup>21</sup>but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. <sup>22</sup>In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning <sup>23</sup>but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. <sup>24</sup>Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

<sup>25</sup>He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup>Did not the Christ<sup>[b]</sup> have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" <sup>27</sup>And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

<sup>28</sup>As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. <sup>29</sup>But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

<sup>30</sup>When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. <sup>31</sup>Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. <sup>32</sup>They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

<sup>33</sup>They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together <sup>34</sup>and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." <sup>35</sup>Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Christ is Risen! Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

“But we had hoped.”

When I was in high school, I had a friend whose family was always late to everything, especially his father. I never realized how they managed a family with four kids and busy schedules and always late.

It wasn't until I went to the movies with all of them one time and realized how they make their crazy schedules and life and lateness work. We all got to the movies. Of course, by the time we got five teenagers and two parents in the theatre with snacks and all, we missed half of the movie.

When the movie ended, they all stayed in their seats. I was ready to leave and just figured I would have to see the beginning of the movie another time. But then, they didn't move. Obviously, they have done this routine before. We then stayed for the start of the movie again. We stayed until we saw all of what we missed.

Besides the embarrassment, the thing that stuck with me about that experience was how odd it was to watch the beginning of the movie when you had already seen the end. Knowing how the story comes out changes how you see the beginning.

As we look at this story of the Road to Emmaus, we already know that the stranger is the Christ; we already know that Christ is risen, we already know how the story comes out, we have seen the end.

So, we may miss the utter despair behind the words, “*but we had hoped.*”

“*. . . .and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.*” (20-21)

“But we had hoped.”

Have you ever lost hope, lost confidence in the future, lost a vision of what can be, could be, and should be?

“But we had hoped.”

Have you ever lost your grip on the promises of God?

We don't have to think too hard or too long for examples in our world, in our shared human history, and even in our own present realities of moments that this phrase, “but we had hoped,” stings with the sourness of its reality. Right?

After the recent desecrations of Jewish cemeteries, one elderly woman was interviewed. She responded to the reporter's question with, "But we had hoped this type of thing would not happen again."

On Good Friday a couple of years ago, as I marched with faith leaders—even our presiding bishop and community members from all over Chicago on its south side and over 300 names were read of those who have been shot and killed since the first of this year. I met an elderly man who marched and lived on the south side. We talked as we walked. He said, "We had hoped that after my first son was shot and killed that it would never happen again. We lost that hope when my other son was shot this year."

But we had hoped he would have gotten into college.

But we had hoped they wouldn't have gotten a divorce.

But we had hoped that the cancer wouldn't come back.

But we had hoped that the father wouldn't have kicked his son out of the house for being who he is.

But we had hoped.

Maybe your recent reality is but we had hoped that I could go to prom, or I would have a graduation ceremony. But we had hoped that synod assembly would occur or AFFIRM this summer. But we had hoped the vacation we had long awaited wouldn't get cancelled. But we had hoped we wouldn't have to go another week without seeing mom in the nursing home. But we had hoped we he wouldn't lose his job. But we had hoped we could be back in worship this Sunday.

In our story these men had lost hope—they were walking home to their village of Emmaus, returning to their former lives after years of following Jesus. They had gotten up. They had lost their confidence in the future; they had lost the way forward. So, they decided to go back, back to the comfort of their past. They had hoped in Jesus, but now that they had lost hope, they were feeling, well, lost!

Until they were found by Jesus on the road. When they were at their lowest, Jesus found them and picked them up.

When they were the farthest from God, God in Christ came to them. They were on the road away from Jesus—when Jesus found them on the road.

The first thing Jesus did was open the Bible to them and tell them about himself, explaining to them about how this Jesus they were lamenting was really the Messiah of God. "Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures."

Then they got home and invited him in to eat with them. They still didn't know who he was, but they remembered Jesus' teaching about welcoming the stranger so they compelled him to come in. Then he fed them:

*"When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him."*

Sometimes it takes powerful action or ancient words to remind us of Jesus' presence and resurrection in our midst. We do not always or cannot always feel or know this, but we are reminded that nothing separates us from the love of Christ, not even death, not even a Corona Virus.

It is all so in character with Jesus' ministry and message—Jesus' appearances tell us that Good News of his Resurrection is for everyone. God's salvation has come for all people. Not always the easiest message to receive and live out.

It's a hard message to believe for anyone and so patient Jesus takes time to help dispel the disciple's unbelief. "Don't be afraid and don't doubt," Jesus tells those disciples gathered together around the dinner table with fish as the main course in that home in Jerusalem. "Look at me," he says to them, inviting them to look at his wounded hands and feet. Just when we thought Thomas was the only one who needed to see to believe.

The Emmaus road story is one of hope, promise, and it is a story that we are all invited to dwell within the pages. Each of us experiences our own Emmaus roads and various ones at that over our life. There are times when we play various characters in this divine drama.

I have always found it interesting that there are two people the story says that are walking on the road to Emmaus, but only one of them is named. Cleopas. I wonder, could it be that the other is not named, because the other walking her way is you and me. Throughout life, we have many Emmaus moments, where we say to the ones walking with us and to God, "But we had hoped."

And when it seemed as all hope was lost; there in that tomb of fear, doubt, and disbelief; there God was, where God always is; calling us out of the tombs, walking the way with us on our Emmaus roads of life, and revealing to us hope that can even be found in brokenness.

The community that follows Jesus is charged with giving testimony to his saving work and that work is to be visible in the world. In the gospel Jesus himself says, "Look at me, touch me" and eats in the disciple's presence. We live in an increasingly visual culture, where the biblical and reformation admonishes us to listen, to feel, and to show to many who base their lives on the evidence of what they see.

Today's gospel is nothing less than an invitation into a new world order. The disciples (and we) are invited, called, and welcomed into a new creation, and it will be their (and our) task to share this invitation with the rest of the world, beginning always with the Easter story.

When we tell the Easter story the proclamation of our whole lives, sharing and showing what reconciliation, repentance, and forgiveness looks like, we live a visible Easter everyday of our lives.

But we had hoped. Hope meet us here this very day. Meets us in each other, in our neighbor, in proclamation, in worship and in this proclamation that is needed more now than ever:

Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Amen.