

STATIONS OF THE RESURRECTION: THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Text: Luke 24:13-27

LHUMC 5/4/14

I. Introduction

- A. We shouldn't be surprised that we end our journey that began way back in Advent of all these places that were so important in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus on a road.
 - 1. This journey has been filled with important roads on which the story took place.
 - 2. All of which goes to show the transitory nature of Jesus and his disciples—they were always on the move, which would have been unusual back then, when most folks lived their whole lives in very small areas.
 - 3. They were on the road constantly, and apparently it didn't end at Easter.
 - B. Of all the roads we've been on, this Emmaus Road is the murkiest historically and geographically.
 - 1. The problem is that over history, no more than four different villages around Jerusalem have claimed to be the "Emmaus" in the story.
 - 2. So if you go as a tourist to see Emmaus, it's kind of a challenge. (Constantine story). If you want to visit the real thing, it's hard to know which one.
 - 3. So it's also hard to figure out exactly where this road was and exactly where it was leading.
 - C. And the story itself is kind of murky.
 - 1. Beginning with those two disciples
 - a) We find out that one is named Cleopas—but the problem with that is that this is the only time he is mentioned in scripture.
 - b) And the other one isn't named at all.
 - 2. So I can't give you a lot of historical or geographical information with this story. You'll just have to use your imagination.
- II. Which isn't all bad—as I read the Emmaus Road story again, I realize in its murkiness may be its power. Because we don't know the details, it allows us to look at this road more symbolically, and when we do that, this becomes an important road, a road we can all find ourselves on in

some way depending on where we are on our faith journey. So here are some examples of ways you might look at this particular road.

- A. For you, it may be a road that is symbolic for any road that you're on when you fail to recognize Jesus in your midst.
 - 1. Give Cleopas and that other guy, whoever he was, some credit for not forgetting the story.
 - 2. Even though they weren't apparently members of the smaller group of disciples who had been first-hand witnesses to the risen Christ, they hadn't given up on him or the story.
 - 3. And so they were walking along this road talking about what had apparently happened back in Jerusalem.
 - 4. And yet even as they speculate about the risen Christ, they fail to recognize him as he finally appears in person to them.
 - 5. And the scene is kind of like our image today—he's walking with them, but they can't fill in the outline of who he really is.
 - 6. There are times in all of our journeys when we miss Jesus as he walks alongside of us. It is just part of being human.
 - 7. And the fact that they were disciples, reminds us that even we good church-going, Jesus-believing disciples can miss him too once in a while.
 - 8. In my life, sometimes those times have been when I get a little too stuck on myself and my accomplishments and fail to recognize the one that walks along side of me making it all possible.
 - 9. Or for you, maybe it's when you've been through a tough time in your life and you've made it through to the other side, but have forgotten the one that was walking alongside you all the way.
 - 10. But it's probably true to say that we've all had those Emmaus Roads in our lives when Jesus is there, but we don't see him.
- B. Or maybe that Emmaus Road for you is any road you've been on that leads you back to your former life before Easter. Or maybe even further back than that.
 - 1. We don't know why these two were going back to Emmaus, but the chances are pretty good that is was where they had come from, and so now that they assumed the Easter story and the Jesus story was over, they were going back to their lives as before.

2. Depending on where you've come from, that trip back may be to a dramatically different place than where you are now.
 3. Or maybe it's back to a place where you were free of the demands of discipleship that we talked about last week in those words to Jesus to the other disciples, who instead of going back home, were locked in the room. (I'm not sure which reaction is worse!)
 4. Jesus talked of "going forth into the world", and "forgiving people" and "receiving the Holy Spirit"—things that Cleopas and his friend weren't doing either as they headed back home.
- C. Or maybe this Emmaus Road for you is simply that road that you've been on in your life that takes you away from the harsh realities of life.
1. It's also been suggested that with these two were on a road to denial—that they were headed away from Jerusalem simply because of what had happened there on Calvary a few days before.
 2. So you could say that they weren't out on that road to spread the Good News but to escape what they thought was bad news.
 3. There are things and situations that happen in all of our lives where the easiest thing is to take off down the road in the other direction as fast as we can and try to forget that it all happened.
 4. But what is the easiest road isn't always the most faithful road.
 5. You have to wonder if these two would have seen the risen Christ a lot sooner if they'd only hung around in Jerusalem with the other disciples a little longer.
 6. If they had, this would have been a much different journey for them.
- D. And then finally, despite the fact that they don't recognize him right away, never forget that for all of us, the Emmaus Road is the road that we all travel every day—that road where Jesus walks with us.
1. When you look at it that way, this road becomes every road for us.
 2. Because the great good news of Easter is that the risen Christ is now with us through life every step of the way, even if we don't recognize him, even if we don't appreciate him.

3. He is with us on the smooth roads, the joyful roads, and the tough roads.
4. He is with us when the roads are uphill, or downhill, when they take us to places we want to go, and even when they take us to places we'd rather not go.
5. Whatever kind of roads we find ourselves on , they are all Emmaus Roads for us as disciples of the one who always walks alongside of us.

- III. Conclusion—A couple of final thoughts as we come to the end of this Holy Week and Easter journey to these places that are so familiar and so new at the same time.
- A. The first is the “so-what” question, the question of why we’ve taken this journey, why we have visited all of these places.
 1. Rather than go all theological on you, I share a story told by Will Willimon: “So last week, in conversation with a troubled soul in my congregation, when asked by him, “Preacher, do you think I can ever get a grip on my addiction to heroin?”, I almost responded, “No. Almost no one ever gets that monkey off his back I really don’t think you can get better.” But then I remembered we are in the season of Easter, that time when the church, in its wisdom, keeps insisting that we tell the story of the resurrection of Christ as our story, as a truthful account of what is really going on in the world. So I responded, “You know, if this were about you or even the two of us working together, the answer is “No, you can’t get better.” Fortunately, in the afterglow of Easter, this is about God, about God’s determination to free you and give you the life that God intends for you. Now that Jesus has been raised from the dead, there’s always hope for us.”
(Pulpit Resource, April-June, 2014, p. 28)
 2. We’ve taken this journey, with the jeering crowds and politicians that caved to them, with the disciples, who went from dozing to denying to despair, and with these two unknowns today, because in the end, it is a journey of hope.
 3. It is a journey from wherever we have been to the life that God intends for us.
 4. It is a life-challenging journey, but it is also a life-changing journey.

5. And it is a journey that is new and different and exciting every year when we take it yet again.
- B. My other thought comes from the rest of today's story.
 1. We didn't hear the whole story today, because as you might remember, Cleopas and his buddy finally do recognize Jesus.
 2. But it's not at first, and it's not even as he begins to explain it all to them.
 3. No, it's not until a few verses later when Jesus sits down to eat with him.
 4. And as he takes the bread and breaks it and shares it with them, it's at that instant when they finally recognize him.
 5. You get the idea from rest of the story that all roads lead here?
 6. That despite our struggles to sense the presence of Christ with us sometimes, it is here when we break the bread and drink from the cup of communion that Jesus becomes most real to us?
 7. So as we gather at the end of the road as those first disciples did, to have a meal with Jesus, we give thanks for his presence with us on all the roads of life.
 8. And we give thanks that as we go from this place, we will go with a renewed sense of hope that comes from recognizing Jesus in our midst as we live as his disciples.