

Luke 24:13-35

3rd Sunday of Easter

April 26, 2020—Shepherd of the Mountains, Pinetop, AZ

INI

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Today's reading is one of my favorite accounts of Jesus' resurrection appearances. It's one of my favorites because you can feel the tension in the scene. You can feel the anticipation build as you read through the account of these two unsuspecting disciples as they take their sad long walk away from Jerusalem and as Jesus joins them on their way. Luke tells us, **"Their eyes were kept from recognizing Him."** They don't know what's about to happen. But we do. They see only a stranger. But we are given inside information and we know that they are talking with Jesus. They have heard some nonsense about an empty tomb and seeing Jesus alive, but that seemed to them all it was—merely some nonsense. But we are outsiders looking in. We have read and heard the preceding verses about how Jesus actually appeared to the women on their way home from the tomb.

These disciples don't know that their lives too are going to be completely flipped around. With their words, **"we had hoped,"** they signal to us that they are still living in the reality of Good Friday and Holy Saturday. They are filled with sorrow. But we know better.

Their understanding of all the prophecy and promises of God going all the way back to the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3 was lacking. They don't yet know that all of their previous hopes were inadequate, that their understanding was incomplete, that the events of the previous week were necessary to accomplish all that they *should have* hoped for. But we know, because we've heard it before.

They don't know that what they *had hoped*...didn't compare to the true hope that they should have had. But we do. Because we have read what has been handed down through the apostles. We have devoted ourselves to their teachings. We have seen the OT through the lens of the NT and have seen Jesus in all of its pages, from creation, to the promise of a Savior in Genesis 3:15, to the Rock providing lifegiving water, to the hope of David, to the suffering servant in Isaiah. We have seen that Jesus was there all along, that God's redemption plan is there throughout, and that this is what it looks like...a gruesome, beaten, despised man, bleeding on a cross and dying, and a tomb with its stone rolled away and an angel proclaiming, **"He is not here, but has risen."** ^{Luke 24:6} We already know all that was necessary for our salvation.

As the story progresses the anticipation builds, because we know what had happened that very morning. Even if you were reading or hearing this account for the first time, you'd have at least a hint of and with some excitement could anticipate what was going to happen next. In the preceding verses we, along with those women at the tomb and the angel proclaiming this good news, we saw the risen Lord. In this short set of verses, we feel the tension building, the suspense increasing, as we await their lightbulb moment, their "ah ha!" moment. And we want to scream out at them, "come on guys! Connect the dots faster! It's not that difficult!"

And yet have heard it many times already, so it doesn't seem difficult for us because we already know. And somehow the mystery of this account is let out a little bit for us. The excitement is let out a little bit. It's like when you've watched a good movie or read a good book more than once. You still enjoy it, but it's never quite the same as the first time. Like with other stories, that first time you heard of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, when you didn't know yet what the ending was, you felt like you could relate to Cleopas and the unnamed disciple. You, in a way, shared in their mystery and suspense and discovery and excitement.

But now, knowing the end...there is still some excitement and tension and suspense, but it's not the same. We had hoped we could recapture the emotions surrounding *our* first experience with these verses. We had hoped...but it's not the same. And so sometimes we'll try to insert ourselves into the story. We are tempted to allegorize it and imagine ourselves as that unnamed disciple...image in it that *we* were the ones walking that road that Easter. But you are not that unnamed disciple. I am not that unnamed disciple. This isn't *your* account. This isn't *your* Easter experience. And in fact, this reading isn't even about Cleopas or

that unnamed disciple anyways. Sure, they are there. But the focus is not on them. The focus in these verses, as well as the overall focus of all the writings of Moses and the Prophets that would be opened to these two...it's all about Jesus.

In these verses with these two unsuspecting disciples the message rings out clear once again. Christ is risen indeed! And the two recognize Him in the breaking of the bread, and they recount how their hearts burned within them as He gave the best Bible study ever given, and they rush back to Jerusalem to tell the others, and they get there but before they can make their announcement the others tell them first, **"The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!"** But the bubble isn't burst for these two disciples. This isn't just their good news to share. It belongs to all of them. And the two gather with the ten and they all share in the experience of Good Friday sorrow that has been transformed into Easter amazement and joy.

It's a happy ever after kind of story. And that's why so many of us love the account of the Road to Emmaus. We love to join in their ups and downs because, even if we don't experience the exact same thing that they experience, we can relate to their emotional roller coaster. We also have hopes and dreams. And sometimes with some planning and hard work they lead to moments of celebration. And some other times, maybe often, we wind up saying "we *had* hoped."

What had you hoped for? There are so many things that we can't list them all.

We had hoped that the Covid crisis would be over by Easter so we could celebrate together. But instead we are still worshiping apart from one another two weeks later.

Maybe you had hoped for good news from the doctor or a swift recovery from a procedure, but now you're planning an extended treatment schedule or waiting for the day that procedure can be rescheduled.

Or possibly you had hoped that by this point in your life you would have a better handle on your temptations and sins. But you see that you're not any better at handling them; just better at hiding them.

And perhaps you had hoped that your faith would be stronger by now, that there wouldn't be so many questions still to be wrestled with along your long walk.

We had hoped for so many things in our lives, and we love this story because in it we see their happy ending, and we long for ours too. This Emmaus account is not our account. But let me tell you a little secret; we are in the story.

Jesus said to them. **"O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?"**

Who knows which exact accounts Jesus pointed them to in this period of instruction? But all of them dealt with God preserving His people, providing for His people, redeeming His people, from Adam and Eve right down to you and me. When Jesus says "it is/was necessary" He's not only talking about the salvation of the people in His immediate company. He's talking about the salvation plan for believers of all ages. It was necessary that the Christ should suffer for you, for your sins. And He did. It was necessary that the Christ should rise again for you, putting an end to death for you, for your eternal life. And He did.

And it is necessary that these things written about Him in both the OT and the NT should be revealed to you. And He does this through the breaking of the bread still, through the pouring out of Baptismal waters, through the proclamation of His Word in which we find that all of the promises of God, all that is necessary for your salvation, has been fulfilled in Him.

We had hoped for so many other things in our lives. But the one hope that doesn't change, the one hope that endures, is rooted in the Word of a crucified God and His empty tomb. In this Good News we *have* hope and enduring hope, even in the darkest hours of our journeys because we know the rest of the story. There is still suspense and anticipation and some mystery along the way. But we know the end. It's a burning joy in our hearts throughout all our days. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia! And because Christ is risen, we are risen. We are risen indeed. Alleluia! Amen.