

# For the Journey

April 23/26 - Rev. Dave Crawford



*“The risen Christ comes to us, as he came to his first disciples. But sometimes we fail to see him among us. Why? Our modern ways of thinking are enlisted in service of our disbelief. We are blinded by our modern prejudices and preconceptions to the presence of Christ. Nonetheless, because of his love for us, the risen Christ comes to us, walks with us, and we are given the way to faith.”*  
*(William Willimon, comments on Luke 24:13-35)*

This Sunday’s Gospel is the popular story of the walk to Emmaus, found only in Luke. Two of Jesus’ disciples have left the chaos of the Jesus movement’s demise in Jerusalem, and are heading home. A stranger, who is not a stranger at all, joins them on the journey. Their eyes are kept from recognizing the risen Christ at their side although later they perceive his presence. But why didn’t they recognize him initially? Here were two of the insiders who had accompanied Jesus every step of the way from Galilee to Jerusalem.

Still, they couldn't see him as he walked with them. Why? Were the disciples once again showing their ineptitude or rather the reality of our different ways of perceiving truth? Do we see the risen Lord when he's near to us?

Douglas Sloane, in his 1994 book, Faith and Knowledge: Mainline Protestantism and American Higher Education, argued that since the early 1900's "quantifiable thinking" (statistics, matter, money) has reigned supreme in western universities while "qualifiable thinking" (thoughts of beauty, right and wrong, good and bad) has fared worse. That reality may have altered somewhat in western academia with the rise of progressive intersectionality around career preparation and ethical activism but perhaps the dichotomy still exists.

Thomas Long tells of an auction organized by students for some worthy cause. Faculty at the university were asked to donate services for the auction. Long, being a preaching professor and a theologian, offered to write a love letter to a person of the bidder's choice. A few weeks after the auction a young woman showed up at his office, saying that she paid \$ 50 for him to write a love letter to her boyfriend. Long had assumed he'd be writing to a woman and was a bit taken aback by her request. "Look", she said, "I won the bidding, I paid 50 bucks for your writing." Long replied, "Why do you need an old guy like me to write a romantic epistle for you?" She answered, "I'm in electrical engineering!"

Perhaps Sloane was correct, partially at least. Some of us are more quantifiable, some more qualifiable, in the ways we do things. Maybe that was the case for the disciples? Or maybe not? Maybe those two, in their inability to "get it" at first, represent us in our own faith journeys. Don't forget, they had just witnessed the crucifixion, the end of the movement, more importantly the end of their would-be Messiah. Sure, there were reports of an empty tomb filtering through the scattering disciples but clearly the world "as usual" had won the day, they must have thought. And as Jesus' death had blinded them so it blinds us, tells us the world is closed off, bordered, limited, shut down. There are times for us, in our lives, when we don't perceive the holy among us, when we can't see the risen Christ beside us, when Easter's hope has been replaced by Lent's cynicism. We don't get it, don't understand. That doesn't mean the risen Christ is absent or disinterested, doesn't mean God has left us to our own devices. It's just that our wifi signal is a bit weak, or the power is low, or service isn't perceptible.

Two followers of Jesus are trudging along the dusty road seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus when suddenly a stranger sidles up to them, engages with them, even opens up the scriptures to them.

He comes to them as one unknown. He comes on the first day of the week, in other words, for Jews, their work week, our Monday. He comes not while they're at worship, but while they're on the road, not while they're deep in prayer or studying the Bible but while they're walking their way home, near close of day with daylight fading. The same is true for us. God comes to us on the way, when the way is easy and when the way is rough, when we feel the Lord's presence and when we feel nothing.

We are not alone. We live in God's world. Thanks be to God.

Grace and Peace  
Rev. Dave



When Jesus 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...

*-Luke 24:30-31*