



4/26/2020

“Emmaus Encounters”

Scripture: Luke 24:13-35 (31, 35) NIV

Third Sunday of Easter

Theme: Jesus himself will come and walk alongside us in our journey of life. The risen Christ will engage us in conversation about our hopes and dreams, our fears and doubts, and our disappointments and pain. He will give us instruction and understanding. And if invited into our hearts and homes, he will come and sit with us at table, and reveal himself to us. He will show us that he truly lives and gives us joy to share the good news with others.

Luke 24: 13-35

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

¹⁷ He asked them, “*What are you discussing together as you walk along?*” They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

¹⁹ “*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. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ 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.

²² In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴ Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.”

²⁵ He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

(vs.28-29)

²⁸ As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. ²⁹ 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.

³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² 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?”



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

For many years, this has been one of my favorite gospel stories, for it describes at some length a most wonderful encounter with the risen Christ, Jesus. This one took place on Sunday afternoon of the resurrection. Only Cleopas, one of the two persons who encountered Jesus while coming from Jerusalem, is named.

One of the things that has always captured me in this story is that most or all of us can relate to one or more aspects of it.

There are times in all of our lives where we feel bewildered, disappointed, frustrated, even heartbroken; whether it be from the loss of a loved one, our own health, financial security, dreams and aspirations for ourselves or others, and so on.

It is in those times that **Jesus himself will come and walk alongside us in our journey of life.**

Sometimes we may not at first recognize the risen Jesus, even if we have been introduced to him or have known him before. It may be kept from us, as it was for these two, as well as others at the time. Or, it may be that we are so caught up in our own loss, confusion, doubt, fear, disappointment and grief, that we are unable to realize that it is Jesus who walks beside us, even as he has promised.

But then, the risen **Christ will engage us in conversation.** Even though he already knows, he will listen to our hopes, our doubts, our disappointments, and our pain.

If we will listen, he will give us instruction and understanding. Just as Jesus explained to them through the scriptures the true nature of God’s plan of salvation, so Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, whom God the Father has sent in his name, reveals these things to us through Bible study, prayer, meditation, and holy conversation or conferencing. These things may take place in set times and locations, or simply along the way of the journey of life, as in this encounter with the risen Lord.

And if we invite him, **Jesus will come into our hearts and homes**, he will come and sit with us at table, and reveal himself to us. Jesus will make himself known in the breaking of the bread, as he did in Emmaus. That’s even more reason to give thanks and bless the food we eat, remembering that he is truly with us, whatever our circumstances.

Now I realize that things are very different for us in these days of the COVID-19 pandemic. But let me assure you that Jesus is alive. He is risen indeed! And he will come and walk beside you. Whatever you are facing and feeling. Whatever questions, doubts, and fears you may face. Jesus is beside you.



I don't know if he's wearing a mask or not ☺, but if you open your heart to him, and invite him in, he will make himself known to you. He will give you a peace that passes all understanding. He will give you hope that believes in that which you may not see – how God is at work in your life right now and can give you faith and strength to make it through whatever you are dealing with.

And once you have encountered and experienced him in this way, you will want to share it with others!

In fact, I wonder and do see how Jesus would do things in these days.

Perhaps it's from a distance, like with drive-by or through-the-window greetings to those in nursing homes or elsewhere.

Maybe it's by putting a sign in your front yard, reminding folks of Christ's love.

... through caring first responders and health care professionals.

... by homecare workers and family caregivers

... through social media, phone calls, or cards

... You could read and share Apps like the Upper Room, YouVersion Bible and others, providing words of wisdom, comfort, and inspiration

With more time at home with family, I'm sure some of you are spending more of it together around the kitchen or dining room table, perhaps in conversation about what is happening in this time and how you feel about it. This may be the perfect opportunity to start a new or closer relationship with God and each other.

As challenging as it can be navigating so much "togetherness", be thankful for having one another. I'm sure you have been working things out, and may already have time, space and activities planned or in hand. And if you haven't already, consider times of prayer, bible reading, conversation, recreation and other ways you and your family can build relationships and grow together. As the weather is getting nicer, I know Karen & I are enjoying being able to take a couple of work breaks together for a few minutes outside with our dog, Rascal.

And for those staying separated from family because of health concerns, perhaps you have found other ways to stay emotionally connected with those you love.

Even if you live alone, remember that you are or can be part of God's family in Christ! Though we may be separated by miles, as those two who encountered Jesus along the way to Emmaus, we can communicate and connect in new and wonderful ways with others -- in spirit and truth, with hearts that are strangely warmed, as theirs were. And in today's world circumstances, many are realizing more than ever that we are really one world, and all children of God.



Kathryn A. Kimball, the Curator of The Upper Room Chapel and Christian Art Museum, shared these words in her reflection upon cover art of the March/April 2020 issue of The Upper Room, which happens to be called Road to Emmaus by Michael Torevell.

She says, “An Emmaus experience can occur along any ‘road’ that we travel in life – during times of grief, the Lenten journey, or even in ordinary times. Like Cleophas, we might encounter the risen Christ where and when we least expect it. Will we recognize Jesus? Perhaps others traveling the road will see Christ within us as we share the joyful news of our risen Savior.”

Friends, until we are once again able to gather at the Lord’s Table for holy communion, or simply for worship, fellowship or other times and places, we can still share the joy and encouragement of knowing and experiencing the risen Christ in our midst!

Let me know if and how you have had an Emmaus encounter or experience in your life journey. Please share with me or someone else what difference it has made for you. And if you haven’t done so yet, I invite you to receive him into your heart and life today . . .

Prayer: Christ Jesus, when fear, grief, or simply the cares of the day bog us down and we cannot see you, come to us. Walk alongside us in our journey. Engage us in conversation about our dreams, our doubts, and our disappointments. Give us instruction and understanding. And as we invite you into our hearts and homes, come and stay with us. Reveal yourself for more fully to us. Make yourself known in the breaking of the bread. And may we share with joy that good news with others. Amen.