

“Two Stories and a Meal”

April 26, 2020
CoVid-19 wk 6

Rev. Kimberly Heath
Luke 24: 13-35 NIV

originally broadcast from the home of Rev. Dr. Alan & Wendy Bennett

Luke 24:13-35 New International Version (NIV) On the Road to Emmaus

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

He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” They stood still, their faces downcast. 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?” “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.

The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 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.

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

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

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

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

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

"Two Stories and a Meal"

The scripture reading today still takes place that first Easter Sunday. There are several stories of Jesus appearing to people after his resurrection, and this is one of them. Two followers of Jesus are walking to the nearby village of Emmaus.

One of the followers on the road was Cleopas. Who was Cleopas? I have no idea. He doesn't appear before this scripture and we never hear of him after this story. And who was the other guy? He doesn't even get named in the story. These two are disciples or followers of Jesus, but they are not part of the chosen twelve; they are two of the many nameless, no one has ever heard of, followers of Jesus.

After his resurrection, Jesus appears first to 'insignificant' people, like women. But these two are another good example. Not only are they nobodies in the eyes of the world, they are nobodies in the Jesus movement. Why does Jesus appear and walk with these two nobodies? I don't know, except that God likes to appear to nobodies and to work through them. God likes to hide treasure in ordinary, unassuming clay jars like Cleopas and his friend, like you and me.

The town of Emmaus is 7 miles (or 11 kms) away, about a 2-hour walk. As they walk, a stranger joins them. At this point the experience of the brutal Crucifixion of Jesus is fresh and they are still processing that reality; and then added to that are strange rumours of people seeing Jesus alive. When Jesus, himself risen, but still unrecognizable, joins their walk and asks them what they are talking about, these disciples start telling and retelling the story of pain and confusion and trauma.

Part of how we humans deal with painful, confusing experiences is to talk about them. All we've been talking about recently is the pandemic and how it's affecting everyone. This past week Nova Scotia experienced a

horrific shooting — the largest mass shooting in Canadian history. As it was unfolding and afterword; I kept trying to understand what had happened and why.

At some point in the week I realized that we probably won't ever really understand it, but talking about it is part of how we try to make sense of it and heal.

What stories have you been talking about recently? When someone you like and trusts calls you and asks you how you are doing, and what is going on in your world, what do you tell them? What is your story?

Some of you know that my story revolves around moving in with my parents to help out. My dad has had the chronic condition of Pulmonary Fibrosis for over a year... which causes the hardening of lung tissue and shortness of breath; but in the last month, coinciding with AHBL (All Hell Breaking Loose!) his health really started to slide quickly. After we'd all quarantined, I decided to move in with them.

Shortly after we initiated Palliative Care and got some relief for his brutal symptoms. With the help of new medications, occupational and physiotherapy and nursing and a dietitian, we had gained some ground: instead of losing weight, he started gaining weight, energy and mobility. It was all looking good until a CT scan a week ago revealed that he has cancer in his lungs.

These kinds of things are hard in 'normal' times. But I don't need to tell you how strange and challenging it is to do anything related to medical needs in the middle of a pandemic. It is hardship on top of hardship. That is part of the story that I am in. If Jesus walked up to me on the road, that's the story I'd be telling him.

A doctor might ask: "Where does it hurt?" "What are you worrying about – what goes through your mind at 2:30 in the morning?"

Jesus listens to the men on the road. He hears their story and their hurt. It is so important that we share our pain and our trauma. If you have no person you can talk to; then talk to God. Write a letter, go for a drive and talk out loud. Telling our story and getting it out is an important part of healing... but we don't want to get stuck in our story.

Jesus listens to them and then he tells them his story. But though Jesus has just been through this time of great trauma, Jesus is no longer the same person he was. Jesus is the Risen Christ, not just Jesus who came from Nazareth, but the Christ who was there at Creation. He's been through hell and back. Jesus doesn't tell them his small story of pain and worry — instead Jesus goes back to the beginning and tells them the big story. He shares the story of God's salvation and God's love for all people.

He takes them back centuries to Moses and the prophets — he takes them back and shows them how this pain is part of a much bigger story, and that indeed they are part of the bigger story and the bigger picture. As they listen to the bigger story, their hearts burn within them.

If you were to let Jesus catch up to you on your walk today and listen to your pain; if you took a moment to stop and listen to Jesus; what is the bigger story he would tell you?

Part of the big story that I am hearing is that God is bringing good and blessings out of this Pandemic time. If these were 'normal times,' I'd be running around like a crazy headless chicken from work to home to my parents' place, but instead I am able to be here with my parents in a beautiful location at one of the most precious times of life. There is so much life here. In the midst of a time of moving closer to death, I see so much life in the future too.

The story I am hearing is that one day I will look back and see this as one of the most special and meaningful times of my life ... and that I should not be anxious, but breathe and move more slowly and appreciate all that there is to be grateful for. That is some of the bigger story that God is telling me.

What is the bigger story Jesus would tell you?

The big story is always about the love God has for you that will never change.

The big story is always that you are not alone and that this is not the end.

The big story is always one about life. Both stories are important.

The big story does not erase our smaller story.

Remember that when Jesus rose from the dead, he still had the scars; he still had physical evidence of the pain and the trauma — but it wasn't the only thing that defined him now.

The story of his life was now bigger than the story of his death, but both are still true and both are still there. It's the same with us. Our pain and our struggle are very real, but we need to hear the good news that those hurts are not our ending. Jesus walks with us in our struggles and will bring us healing and new life from them.

The two followers of Jesus said that their hearts burned within them as the stranger told the big story on the road, but it wasn't until they ate a meal with him that it dawned on them that this was Jesus!

Sharing stories and eating meals together is the fabric of true relationship. It's a relationship that Jesus longs to have with you.

As soon as they recognized him, the Risen Christ disappeared. Then these men, who a few hours ago were walking slowly with the weight of their pain, confusion and fear, jumped up and ran back to Jerusalem and told the disciples that they had seen the Risen Lord. It wasn't the end of the story, season 2 had just begun, for they would become disciples to the world.

Christ is Risen! May you find yourself in this resurrection story.