May 4, 2014

Luke 24:13-35

*When Jesus Broke the Bread*

Rev. Kerry Smith

Greenland Hills United Methodist Church

Luke 24:13-35 New Revised Standard Version

That same day two of them were walking to the village Emmaus, about seven miles out of Jerusalem. They were deep in conversation, going over all these things that had happened. In the middle of their talk and questions, Jesus came up and walked along with them. But they were not able to recognize who he was. He asked, “What’s this you’re discussing so intently as you walk along?” They just stood there, long-faced, like they had lost their best friend. Then one of them, his name was Cleopas, said, “Are you the only one in Jerusalem who hasn’t heard what’s happened during the last few days?” He said, “What has happened?” They said, “The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene. He was a man of God, a prophet, dynamic in work and word, blessed by both God and all the people. Then our high priests and leaders betrayed him, got him sentenced to death, and crucified him. And we had our hopes up that he was the One, the One about to deliver Israel. And it is now the third day since it happened. But now some of our women have completely confused us. Early this morning they were at the tomb and couldn’t find his body. They came back with the story that they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. Some of our friends went off to the tomb to check and found it empty just as the women said, but they didn’t see Jesus.” Then he said to them, “So thick-headed! So slow-hearted! Why can’t you simply believe all that the prophets said? Don’t you see that these things had to happen, that the Messiah had to suffer and only then enter into his glory?” Then he started at the beginning, with the Books of Moses, and went on through all the Prophets, pointing out everything in the Scriptures that referred to him. They came to the edge of the village where they were headed. He acted as if he were going on but they pressed him: “Stay and have supper with us. It’s nearly evening; the day is done.” So he went in with them. And here is what happened: He sat down at the table with them. Taking the bread, he blessed and broke and gave it to them. At that moment, open-eyed, wide-eyed, they recognized him. And then he disappeared. Back and forth they talked. “Didn’t we feel on fire as he conversed with us on the road, as he opened up the Scriptures for us?” They didn’t waste a minute. They were up and on their way back to Jerusalem. They found the Eleven and their friends gathered together, talking away: “It’s really happened! The Master has been raised up—Simon saw him!” Then the two went over everything that happened on the road and how they recognized him when he broke the bread.

It doesn’t take very long before you realize that it takes a village. Without an extended family, without the support system of schools and churches and scout groups and sports teams and neighbors, it is nearly impossible to raise a child. We see this idea today in our church. Parents bring their children for baptism promising to raise them in the community of faith. And we the community of faith promise to embrace these children and to play a supporting role in their nurture, guidance, and instruction. We know that it takes a village to raise children in the faith.

It is the same for these youth who will be confirmed today and reaffirm the vows made by their parents at their baptism and decide for themselves that they will join the Christian Church at Greenland Hills. Our youth are supported and encouraged on their journey by all of us as we commit to nurturing them and raising them up to serve God in love.

We are not self-sufficient or independent on our faith journey. When we have questions or doubts we can share those uncertainties with our church family. Faith has always been a community endeavor. From the earliest days of Christianity people would gather together to share the experiences they were having with the risen Christ. The disciples would discover that Jesus was alive and they would immediately return back to the rest of the group to tell the others what had happened. It was 7 miles from Emmaus to Jerusalem, but they didn’t waste a minute in going to tell the others what had happened. Late night 10K, I suppose! When they were all gathered together, they shared their stories and supported, encouraged, and strengthened each other’s faith. They shared in the experience of the resurrection. Walter Wink said, “The resurrection is not a fact to be believed, but an experience to be shared.”[[1]](#footnote-2)

It is the same for our faith. Faith flourishes and grows in a community. Like those people who say they worship God on the golf course. I am sure that they do, but faith grows in a community of people. We are not meant to be spiritual lone rangers. Psalm 116:12-14 asks, “What can I give back to the Lord for all the good things the Lord has done for me? I’ll lift up the cup of salvation. I’ll call on the Lord’s name. I’ll keep the promises I made to the Lord in the presence of all God’s people.” In his book *Finding My Way Home*, Henri Nouwen says, “Christian community is the place where we keep the flame of hope alive among us. That is how we dare to say that God is a God of love when we see death and destruction and agony all around us. We say it together. We affirm it in each other” (p. 105).

In this faith community of Greenland Hills we know that God loves and accepts us. We accept ourselves and we love others, knowing that God’s grace goes with us. As our faith develops throughout our lives, we need a village to sustain a growing faith. We need a faith community to hold on to the faith that God is working to bring grace and peace and mercy and love and life to every life in the midst of all the suffering and heartbreak and cruelty in our world.[[2]](#footnote-3) The two disciples on the Walk to Emmaus had great hopes that Jesus was the One to deliver Israel. As those disciples talked and shared, they were sustained in their faith because they saw Jesus. Faith grows when it is shared.

Two disciples are met on the road, they have the scriptures opened, they share in a meal that reveals the identity and presence of Christ, and then they are sent to share and live the good news. In our worship we gather, we have the scriptures opened, we share in a meal that reveals the identity and presence of Christ, and we are sent to share and live the good news.

The disciples were disappointed and discouraged when they started their walk. They do not know the good news of Easter. They had their hopes up that Jesus was the One, but the future they had dreamed was not to be. They had hoped. Ernest Hemingway is said to have written a short story in six words on a napkin, “For sale: baby shoes, never used.”[[3]](#footnote-4) The pain of what happened, but also the pain because what could have happened will not happen.

They had hoped. There is great joy in the gift of life but there is also disappointment, heartbreak, and failure. We are so quick to encourage and lift people up, we want to always point to the promise of resurrection. A colleague is disappointed because they did not get a promotion and we say, “Be glad you have a job at all.” We learn of the death of a neighbor’s sister and we say how sorry we are and then we change the subject and ask about the neighborhood party.[[4]](#footnote-5) Or we avoid a friend who has just endured great loss because we do not know what to say. We feel inadequate to confront the darkness of our lives and this world and we run to the light to deny the darkness.

We are people of the resurrection, but it is okay to share our doubts, to share our wounds, and to share our disappointments. The highlight of the Walk to Emmaus story is supposed to be when the disciples have their eyes opened and they recognize that they were walking and talking with Jesus, the risen Christ. Jesus takes the bread, blessed it, breaks it and gives it to them. Could it be that their eyes are open and they recognize that it is Jesus when he takes the bread because they see the wounds on his hands?

Part of being human is being broken. Maybe the disciples recognize it is Jesus when they see his brokenness? Maybe we have to share our brokenness and our doubts and our questions to be able to see the presence of Christ with us? Sharing that the cancer has returned, the addiction was not overcome, our marriage is over, the job did not materialize, that we have doubts about our faith. Our wounds mark us for our journey, and we have to share them with each other to be fully known. Jesus walks with us on this journey of life and faith, astonished that we don’t see as we ought, teaching us the Scriptures that we may understand, sharing his presence through bread and wine, and granting burning hearts that prompt us back into the world.[[5]](#footnote-6)

Today we confirm our promises to be a part of God’s people. We are a part of the Greenland Hills church not because we are worthy, but because we are willing. We are willing to be members of this great and imperfect body. We promise to be a part of God’s people, in good times and bad, when it is easy and when it is hard. We promise to keep learning God’s way in our way, to be forgiving when others disappoint us, and to hope for them to be forgiving of us when we disappoint them. We promise to join in the great path of God’s people and to do our best to strengthen it. May God help us when we weaken, as we surely will. Help us to get back on track. And rejoice with us as we commune with the Greenland Hills family and share the Christian journey with them. Amen.

1. <http://thewakingdreamer.blogspot.com/2011/05/it-takes-village-luke-2433-35-1-some.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. <http://thewakingdreamer.blogspot.com/2011/05/it-takes-village-luke-2433-35-1-some.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. https://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=3188 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. https://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=3188 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. https://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=3188 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)