

April 6, 2008 - Easter 3A

Luke 24:13-49

¹³Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” ¹⁹He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how the chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.” ²⁵Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. ²⁸As they came near the

village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" ³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, "Jesus has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Let us pray.....

The Road to Emmaus is my favorite biblical story about Communion. While I love the stories about the Last Supper with Jesus and his companions gathering to celebrate the Pass Over meal remembering God's accompaniment of the people in their liberation struggle, the encounter of the followers of Jesus on the Road to Emmaus helps us see beyond the formal rituals and sacraments of institutions and see the sacredness, the sacramental nature of all of life and of our daily lives as we live into God's new creation.

The followers of Jesus in this story are not the big important people in the organization. They are not of the 12 disciples. They are not clergy, the ones who have permission from the institution to perform the sacraments. They are just folk, the

grassroots people in the Jesus movement. We don't even know the name of one of them.

This story remind us that the divine can and is revealed in the midst of our very mundane daily lives. And and we do need to continually remind ourselves of this so that we are conscious and aware with our eyes open so that we can see and experience the presence of the Divine in our lives.

BUT, this story is in a context. It is not a story about any 2 people who are on a vacation in a resort on the Bay Islands in the Caribbean who are walking on the golf course. Not to say that God might not break into that context and open their eyes, but that is not the context of this story.

The two folks in our Gospel story have been engaged in the struggle to build God's reign. They have been a part of the Jesus movement. They are survivors of state terrorism, having just witnessed the capture, torture and horrific execution of their leader and teacher. They and their companeros have been forced into hiding as the authorities have unleashed vigilantes against them. Many, like the two characters in our story have fled the city seeking safety in their home towns hoping that they can melt back into the status quo of village life.

They have made it out of the city and are heading down road talking about "all the things that have happened." They are trying to process and understand all that has gone down.

This is a normal response to a traumatic experience. Trying to understand what happened. Might I have done something different? Might we have done something different? How might there have had a different out come?

The time that Nancy and I were rear ended by a drunk driver who fell asleep at the wheel and hit us going 40 miles an hour while we were at a stop light. The car was totaled. Nancy had a back injury and was trapped in the car. I had a broken shoulder. For days and weeks afterwards we went over it again and again, remembering the smallest details.

Or, after a demonstration where the police have created a riot or been particularly violent we often share our stories with each other. Where were you when the police attacked the park? What did you do when they began to fire the tear gas? Were you there when they surrounded the folks on Oak street? Were they real rough on you when you were arrested?

Often when we meet someone and in the conversation we realized that we were apart of the same demonstration or action we start to share personal stories and analysis. This can be a very bonding experience. "Oh, you were there too!" We have a shared experience. Especially if in the ensuing conversation we find that we, not only have a common approach, but we gain a deeper or fuller understanding of the experience. "Our hearts are warmed."

BUT the question raised by the encounter on the Road to Emmaus is, "Does this sharing of the stories and analysis of a traumatic event give us the strength, courage, hope and faith to Return - to RE-ENGAGE in the struggle OR does it lead to or deepen resignation, despair or cynicism?"

The fact that they more deeply and fully understood the events surrounding the confrontation of Jesus and the Kingdom of God movement with the powers and principalities after

their conversation with the stranger on the road did NOT result in their decision to return to Jerusalem and continue the struggle. They were still on their way out of town. They were still looking for a safe place.

It was not until the ordinary, customary, mundane act of blessing and sharing bread at table that something happened that allowed them to ACT on their fuller understanding. Something happened that empowered them to re-turn to the city and take up the struggle.

The situation in the City had not changed. The survivors of the movement were still in hiding. The authorities were still committed to crushing the movement. It was not safe to return.

But something had changed in them. They again experienced love of God that they had know while participating in the ministry of Jesus. They again experienced the reality of the New World of Love, Justice and Peace and they overcame their fear. Yes, death had lost its power! Yes, the God of life and love is more powerful than all the forces of death and all their violence!

This experience filled them with such JOY and urgency that they could not wait until the next day to return and rejoin the movement. "That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem."

They experienced the sacramental reality of their inseparable communion with the divine! Nothing, nothing in the heavens above nor the earth beneath, nothing in life or death could separate them from the love of God that they had know following the Way of Jesus!

Sisters and brothers, the forces of evil are always tempting us with resignation, despair and cynicism - Especially those of us who have allowed ourselves to be touched by the suffering of our world. And it is only as we are able to develop our abilities and capacity to LIVE SACRAMENTALLY that we have the power to resist these temptations. Only as we live into awareness of the sacredness of all of creation, in which we are an integral part, an inseparable part, are we able to live sacramentally.

It is our experience that as a community of faith gathered around the communion table we have and do develop our abilities and capacity to live sacramentally. We remember that we have been changed and are being changed. We have experienced and do experience the love of God on our humble journey to follow the Way of Jesus. We have experienced and do experience the reality of the New World of Love, Justice and Peace and we have and do overcome our fear and put our faith into action. Yes, death has lost its power! ALLELUIA!!! Yes, the God of life and love is more powerful than all the forces of death with all their violence!

Let us pray that as we gather around the Communion Table this morning that the Holy Spirit give us the power to resist one more day the temptations of resignation, despair and cynicism. Let us pray that we go forth from the Communion Table filled with joy and urgency, that our lives may be living sacraments of God's love.

AMEN