



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN

Christ is Risen.....He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

Well, today is another quite familiar story about the road to Emmaus. Two travelers. Friends? Perhaps husband and wife? We have no idea. It was Cleopas and whoever. Maybe one remains unidentified so we can insert our own name into this story. Cleopas and Chuck, or Mary or Fred or Barb or Mike even Gwen. We are out on the road, home to Emmaus. Somehow the idea of inserting our own names into the story makes sense. After all they are people just like us. Most likely they have some of the same concerns as we do today; what to

have for dinner, staying out of trouble, keeping up with the times and keeping their chins up in the face of dashed hope and shattered dreams. Just like us.

They were also religious folks, just like us. They were in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover and where now on their way home. It was a walk they had done many times before. A tradition if you will.

And this Holy week was like no other. Palm branches lined the streets as the teacher from Nazareth, Jesus came into the city. The crowds were enormous. So much was happening in the space of a few short days. But it ended in horror, as they watched Jesus died on the cross. He was buried and some rumors floated around that he was alive again. And so they walk back to home, to Emmaus with aching hearts talking about how they really thought Jesus was the one that God sent to spare them from the Romans. The long awaited Messiah was no longer.

And then a mysterious stranger walks beside them and nudges his way into their conversation. Cleopas and his traveling companion tell the intruder what is bothering them. And the stranger seems to know nothing of what has happened in Jerusalem. Odd. How could that be? The end of Jesus was certainly the talk of the town. And they tell the stranger that their hope had been dashed, because that Jesus was the long awaited Savior and Redeemer.

Of course we all know that the mysterious intruder during the walk was Jesus, but he did not let himself be known to Cleopas and friend. And so Jesus launches into a virtual Bible lesson. He tells the pair that Scripture does not promise just a messiah, but rather a messiah who must be killed before he can enter into glory. Then Jesus presents this messiah as central to the entire Bible, central to all that the prophets had told them. Cleopas and his companion listen to this stranger. The Scriptures were opened up to them, we hear in our Luke

reading. Their eyes were then opened up as well and they saw Jesus as the risen Savior, known to them also in the breaking of the bread.

Have you ever walked the road to Emmaus? I know that I have and not only once. No, not near Jerusalem when Jesus was crucified but yet other things can shatter our faith, break our hope and make us question God's love. Could our current situation with COVID 19 do that? You bet it can. I cannot tell you how many times in the past weeks I have been asked why does God let this virus happen? Where is God's healing power in New York City where 7 to 800 people are dying daily? Each of us, I presume has asked that kind of question at some point in their lives. And many are questioning today; why now, why this virus, why, why, why. We walk in tears. We play the woe is me game and become cynical, and then something happens. Jesus walks beside us too! He appears just when we need him most. And how often have we not recognized him, just like Cleopas?

God is always close enough to hear our fears, to feel our grief. But more is going on in this story. I feel like the Road to Emmaus was also about how we go on with life after the resurrection. Jesus did die on the cross. He died for us to graciously give us forgiveness, life abundant and eternal life. And he came to the two travelers on the road to Emmaus. Jesus came alive to them. And then as the story continues, they go back to Jerusalem and tell the disciples that they had seen Jesus alive. "The Lord has risen indeed." Important thing happened here.

They went and told the disciples that Christ had risen. This telling is as much a tradition as replying, "He is Risen Indeed" to my "Christ is Risen" proclamation. Yes a tradition or command had begun here on the Road to Emmaus, to tell everyone about Jesus. People who knew the truth about Jesus were excited to tell those who did not know. And folks those are our marching orders today too! Even though this COVID 19 is affecting

our way of life, we walk each day with Jesus close at our side. Our faith in Him is what gets us through each new day. And that is something special that we can share with others.

I read a story by Pastor Steve Molin this week that is quite fitting. I think it struck me since I have a bit of perspective on being in seminary and what students go through.

In a small Catholic seminary, the dean asked a first year student to preach one day in chapel. This novice worked all night on a sermon, but still came up empty. At the appropriate time, he stood in the pulpit, looked out over his brothers and said, "Do you know what I am going to say?" They all shook their heads "no" and he said, "Neither do I, the service has ended, go in peace."

Well, the dean was angry and told the student, "You will preach again tomorrow and you had better have a sermon." Again, the novice stayed up all night, but still no sermon. When he stood in the pulpit, he asked, "Do you know what I am going to say?" All the students nodded "yes" so the preacher said, "Then there is no need for me to tell you. The service has ended go in peace."

Now, the dean was livid. "Son, you have one more chance. Preach the gospel tomorrow or you will be expelled from the seminary." Again he worked all night and the next morning stood before his classmates and asked, "Do you know what I am going to say?" Half of them nodded "yes" while the other half shook their heads, "no". The novice said, "Those who know, tell those who don't know. The service has ended, go in peace."

This time the dean just smiled. He walked up to the student preacher, put his arm around his shoulders and said, "Hmhmhmhm..... Those who know, tell those who don't know? Today, the gospel has been proclaimed. So go in peace."

And that is it. That is the tradition that began on the road to Emmaus on that first Easter night. Those like Cleopas who knew Jesus was alive felt compelled to tell everyone they meet this good news. And that is the tradition of Christianity. The good news is shared one person to another, one at a time. Yes, we have preachers

who preach and writers who write great books proclaiming that Christ has Risen, but nothing is better than person-to-person proclamation.

That, I think is why our coffee hour here at Christ the Servant is so important. It is an extension of our worship together that helps us to share our achievements and failures, our mistakes and our fears with others. And we also share our good news of the resurrection, that God is always there to forgive and love us no matter what we do or say. We can see God in the struggles of others sometimes easier than we can see Him in our own. God is alive and walking with all of us on our roads to Emmaus. So who have you told about Jesus during this pandemic? Anyone?

As Lutherans we are often times very quiet about our faith in Jesus. We do well to praise and worship Him while we are in the sanctuary together, but do we share that excitement with others? Are we helping others see that God is still in control during this difficult time of COVID 19?

Too often I think the problem is that the tradition of telling someone who does not know, that Jesus has the answers, has fallen on hard times. This important tradition of sharing our faith has become too personal and we certainly would not want to offend any one. And how sad is that? It is not only the responsibility of every Christian, but also a privilege.

We all have an Emmaus story to tell. Each one of us has come to see Jesus in our own way. We don't have to be seminary students like in our story, and we don't have to be rocket scientists. Heck, we don't even have to be a Rhodes scholar and have the Bible memorized. But we do know these truths: Jesus is alive. Jesus forgives our sins. Jesus grants us abundant life here on earth. Jesus gives us His promise of eternal life with him in heaven. This is our truth. So let your heart burn within you so that those of us who know tell those who don't know. Now that is a tradition we can all live into. AMEN