

Text Luke 24:13-35
Theme “Let’s go home”
Subject The Walk to Emmaus (Cleopas and his wife Mary with Jesus at their house)
Occasion 3rd of Easter – April 23, 2023 – New Song ECUSA – Coralville, IA

Each of the Gospels has a resurrection story

Knowing I’d be looking at the resurrection thru Luke’s lens this morning,
as a visual artist I wondered how I would portray each Gospel

In this year of MATTHEW, I think of Matthew written to a Jewish audience

Alert to Torah, Tanakh, the law – a sense of history and fulfillment

I imagined a Rembrandt etching:

fine black lines pressed into a smooth paper

Matthew’s so excited that in Jesus, Emmanuel¹, GOD IS WITH US:

Jesus would send the disciples out: “**I am with you always**”²

A clear message: GO AND TELL the world

Curiously, in this lectionary year of Matthew, we hear many gospel readings from John

JOHN is lush with stories of Jesus providing signs to help readers believe³

Jesus so wonderfully on display in full color with hues and brush strokes

John could be an art gallery of impressionist works: COME AND SEE

MARK’s telling is so very hurried – everybody needs to **repent and believe**⁴

He writes like a reporter holding a spiral-pad – immediately this; immediately that

An artist in the field sketching out the story before press time

He ends unfinished and leaves us wondering what happened at that empty grave

*The women FLED from the tomb, SEIZED WITH FEAR & SAID NOTHING to anyone*⁵

This morning we’re with LUKE

Luke provides an orderly account⁶ written to Theophilus – a lover of God

Luke brings Jesus to life recalling his very accessible parables and stories

Luke writes for everybody to hear Jesus’ message

- good news to the poor;
- release to captives;
- sight to the blind;
- freeing the oppressed ⁷

Perhaps a brown tone pallet with the warmth & affection of God revealed in Jesus.

¹ Matthew 1:23 (Isaiah 7:14)

² *Ibid.* 28:20b

³ John 20:30-31

⁴ Mark 1:15

⁵ Mark 16:18 (paraphrased)

⁶ Luke 1:1-3

⁷ *Ibid.* 4:18-19

Only Luke tells this story of a couple leaving Jerusalem for Emmaus – a 7-mile walk
 Once we hear the setting and the story, we like it
 Sounds like something we would do
 Big weekend with lots of activity and then,
 “Ready to go?”
 “Sure, I’m pooped. Let’s go home”

When Lesley and I have gone to Des Moines, it’s like that.
 Whether going to the State Fair years ago with the kids
 or going to the Capital on a Sunday afternoon to join a rally for Human Rights
 There’s that moment when we look at each other,
 “Ready to go?”
 “Yah, let’s go home.”
 What’s at home?
 Tend the garden, do the laundry, check in with neighbors, simple supper, rest

This walk to Emmaus seems normal to me – people catching their breath
**Now on that same day two were going to a village called Emmaus ...
 talking with each other about all these things that had happened.**⁸

Who were these two?
 Luke tells **one of them, whose name was Cleopas**⁹

Cleopas is only named here in scripture;
 however, a man named Clopas is named in John’s report of Jesus’ crucifixion
**Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his
 mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas,**¹⁰
 Linger with this for a Sherlock Holmes’s moment with the text
his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary?
 Safe to suppose, Mary, mother of Jesus, did *not* have a sister named Mary
 We can suppose Clopas was the one related to Mary, mother of our Lord
 With many, I’m also supposing the epsilon (ε) got smudged out
 Or in the telling Cleopas became more easily called Clopas
 Further, historic traditions and research teach Cleopas was a younger brother of Joseph
 Joseph, being Jesus’s foster father
 Mary, mother of Jesus, is Cleopas’s sister-in-law
 Mary, wife of Cleopas, would be with her sister-in-law at the foot of
 Jesus’ cross – Jesus is her nephew

⁸ *Ibid.* 24:13a,14

⁹ *Ibid.* 24:18a

¹⁰ John 19:25a

One can easily suppose Mary and her husband Cleopas were friends with Mary and Joseph and even more so after Joseph's death.

Cleopas and Mary lived in Emmaus and would have been together for family and community gatherings (living life together)

Cleopas and Mary knew about Jesus' teaching

Uncle Cleopas and Aunt Mary going to Jerusalem to join their nephew's campaign

- Watching with smiles and palm branches when Jesus rode into town
- Within ear shot of Jesus being arrested and on trial
- Saw Jesus crucified (Cleopas from a distance; Aunt Mary right there)
- They'd heard about the women going to the tomb and finding it empty
- They'd heard the reports Jesus was alive

They had plenty to talk about walking on the road to Emmaus

And they're pooped; so, "*yah, let's go home*"

While Cleopas and Mary were walking and talking, Jesus joined them and asked

"What are you discussing ... ?"¹¹

Sure, what things?

There's a lot to do and see in a city, especially during a festival like Passover

As Luke tells it, we can sense how they poured it all out

What happened to their nephew, Mary & Joseph's boy, Jesus

These were crisis days – full of expectations – breaking the grip of the powers

Life was getting worse for the poor under the Romans

People were getting imprisoned for being faithful

Some people sold and made to be house servants

Disease was rampant – so many infections, no treatment

Life was difficult – always on guard

Roman soldiers were brutal

So they told Jesus' passion story

"Our nephew was from God, he was making a difference, bringing us hope

And the religious and government ganged up on him

*Condemned him killed him"*¹²

"Are you listening? Do you hear what we're saying? Do you get why we're sad!"

WE HAD HOPED THAT HE WAS THE ONE TO REDEEM ISRAEL¹³

"There's talk he is raised from the dead – some of our group saw him"

Luke's report is breathless – and exhausting

They were going home.

We came; we hoped; we saw; we lost

Going home – living life – finding some comforts before they die

¹¹ *Ibid.* 24:17a

¹² *Ibid.* 24:19-20 (adapted)

¹³ *Ibid.* 24:21

Jesus, the new companion, had a different view
 Called them foolish; how their confidence blew away so easily
 Showed how their faith story was being fulfilled in Jesus
 Of course, they invited Jesus to stay for supper; they wanted to learn more – be renewed
 Slim provisions since they’d been away most of the week
 He broke the bread
their eyes were opened, and they recognized him¹⁴

Every night Lesley and I reach our hands across the table and pray aloud,
 “*COME LORD JESUS; BE OUR GUEST; LET THESE GIFTS TO US BE BLESSED. AMEN*”
 Lord, show up at our table like you did at the Emmaus table

Uncle Cleopas and Aunt Mary hurried back to Jerusalem to join the group
 the eleven and everybody else
 Jesus had appeared to some, like he did for them in the breaking of the bread
 They needed to talk
 Think things thru – the prophesies – the fulfillment
**“Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the
 road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?”¹⁵**
Now what? Now what? Now what?

Yes, the teaching of Jesus; the horror of his suffering, death and burial
 But *now what* that he has been raised from the dead?
 Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia! *Now what?*
 Truth be known; after those Easter evening gatherings,
 Someone said, “Let’s Go Home.”

When Mel, Rabbi Esther and I went to Des Moines to lobby on behalf of teachers and
 school libraries and LGBTQ+ rights,
 We saw and heard a lot – some of what we’d hoped – some was a horror of silence
 We’d had no lunch; Rabbi Esther said, “*Let’s go; we can stop for a burrito.*”
 We went to *Tasty Tacos* – others joined us – getting acquainted – talking about it all
 Then a fund raiser for *Iowa Interfaith Alliance* – Senator Trone Garriott spoke
 The evening turned to night;
 We agreed, Let’s go home

Now that we, like an aunt and uncle of Jesus long ago, are home, “*Now what?*”
 The witness and message continue
 Maybe as etchings of fulfillment
GO AND TELL

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 24:31a

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 24:32

Maybe sketches to tell the fearful stories determined to change lives
REPENT AND BELIEVE

Maybe in full color exposing truths that name darkness and bring light
COME AND SEE

And especially as Luke reminds us of Jesus' mission

Work for the POOR

be determined to feed and house them

Recognize people held CAPTIVE by prejudice

Snagged in their privilege

Or trapped in the systems

Bring healing to OPEN EYES

Illuminating life so all people can be welcomed and understood

FREEing people from fears that oppress them

Freed from imagining guns make life safe

Freed to welcome the stranger

Let our hearts burn fresh within us,

Even on the way home

The mission continues

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE