Senior Sunday - Emmaus Road – Walking with Jesus

Luke 24:13-35 Kimby Young

Jeremiah 29:11 May 4, 2025

Several years ago, it was popular to give to graduating seniors the book “Oh, the Places You Will Go” by the wonderful Dr. Suess. Maybe it still is. It is a great book about imagining your future, with all the twists and turns life offers – good and bad. It is full of hope and possibility, imagination and positive energy. “Oh, the Places You Will Go.” The road stretches out before you and off we go. For some reason this great old book came to mind, as I was thinking about our seniors this Sunday, and about the scripture from Luke.

The disciples in the story were heading down a road. They thought they knew where they were going – heading home after a strange and wondrous week in Jerusalem. They thought they knew the way ahead. But there were twists and turns along the way. An unexpected companion on the journey. An unexpected revelation. By the end of the story, they end up right back where they started – in Jerusalem. They ran back to Jerusalem. But they ended up changed forever by the journey, changed forever by Jesus walking along beside them that day.

I’ve preached from this scripture before, especially during the Easter season. And there are many paths of discovery in this story. How Jesus taught them. How they didn’t recognize Jesus – until they did. How their hearts burned with in them as Jesus spoke to them along the way. How they welcomed in a stranger, and in so doing were welcomed into the very presence of God. There’s a lot in this story. Read it again when you have time.

But today, I just want to emphasize two points. The first is the sermon title – walking with Jesus. I love this story because the disciples are walking with Jesus even when they don’t know they are with Jesus. They don’t recognize Jesus. Now at first we say, how could they not recognize Jesus? And maybe there are some explanations. He was transformed by the resurrection. He looked different. Or maybe, They weren’t looking directly at him. They weren’t paying attention. Maybe, God kept their eyes closed for the dramatic reveal in the end. Who knows? For some reason they didn’t recognize Jesus was with them. At first thought we wonder how they could not see, but then we realize the same thing happens to us all the time. God is with us and we don’t even notice. Jesus walks with us. Jesus even carries us. And we don’t even notice. The Spirit of God fills us, encourages us, strengthens us and sends us out, but sometimes we don’t even recognize that God is right here with us. This story is a parable for us. We know God is with us. But we forget. We feel the power of God in our lives, but sometimes we don’t recognize Jesus, we don’t even notice that God is with us. Jesus walks beside us – always. Let us open our eyes and notice the presence and power of God right beside us, always for us, showing us the way. Know that Jesus is with you wherever you go. Especially for our young people just starting out, know that Jesus walks with you. Look for signs of God with you wherever you go.

The second question is how do we notice? How can God open our eyes? How can we know that Christ is with us? How can we see God? The scripture says that their eyes were opened in the breaking of the bread. We believe that in the sacrament of holy communion, our eyes are opened, and we can see God with us. The holiness of the sacrament helps us to see God. The bread reminds us of the body of Christ broken for us. The juice reminds us of the blood of Christ poured out to offer sacrifice for all. These symbols of bread and wine, body and blood, point to the truth of God’s love – they show us Jesus and remind us that Jesus is always with us. Just as common as the bread each day. Just as life giving as the cup we drink.

We believe that God gives us these sacraments and symbols and reminders to help us recognize Jesus, to help us see that God is active in our world. Jesus is a source of strength and guidance in our lives. Jesus will show us the way to live, the path to love, if we pay attention and follow. We believe Jesus is right here, always among us – if we take the time to notice. We believe God is everywhere we go – if we look for guidance and inspiration along the way. Communion is one way God opens our eyes. Scripture is another. The community of believers in the church is meant to be another – a way of knowing and understanding God in the world. There are other ways of seeing God, other ways of knowing that Jesus is with us. The key is to keep looking – to open our eyes and our hearts. To let God open our lives to the presence and call of Jesus.

I started thinking about this sermon as I was thinking about our seniors and other young people and “All the places you will go.” But it applies to all the rest of us here as well. We don’t know where life will lead us. We don’t know what will happen tomorrow. We have some ideas. We have some plans. You have some skills, some abilities, some interests. That will shape your path – that will take you down a certain road. As wonderful Dr. Suess says, “You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose.” Dr. Suess reminds us, sometimes you go up, sometimes you go down. Sometimes you might have to turn round and around. Let me add to Dr. Suess. Things may not go the way we plan. But always God is with us. If we follow Jesus, always Christ goes before us. Look for signs of God along the way. Ask for God’s help when you need it. Thank God for help when you receive it. And know that the Spirit of God is leading you wherever you need to go. Open your eyes. Rather, Let your eyes be opened. And you will see God. May you be blessed in the journey.