

Luke 24:13-35

A lot of the gist of what I want to say about this Gospel story is taken from a sermon I heard a few years back by Ruth Haley Barton & She nailed it!

So today our story takes place on the first Easter Sunday. This immediately follows the crucifixion of their friend and teacher Jesus at the hands of the political powers...The Roman Empire and their own religious leadership.

This is the story of two disciples making their way back to their lives after this tragedy. They grieved and cried at the funeral of their friend. It felt good to all be together, but there was still fear and danger for them and now they have to go home and deal with the emptiness of how they will “go on” without Jesus in their lives.

They head back home...saying goodbye to their beautiful vision of a new Jerusalem. What can be on the other side of this for them? They are in the in-between time. The dessert time...that liminal space between the now and the not yet!

And we hate to be in this place, but it is here that we often meet God isn't it? It's when you leave the familiar...or in many cases it has somehow left you.

This is like Abraham leaving for an unknown land. This is Joseph sitting in a cistern. The Israelites wandering for forty years. Jonah in the Belly of a fish! Mary expectant with the birth of her child...and these two disciples today walking on the road to Emmaus.

For many of us and for our country we are on this path right now.

We don't yet know what it's all gonna look like. We really don't know how things are going to turn out do we?!

...and who are our disciples today? Cleopis (meaning the Glory of God) and another. Some say it was probably his wife or maybe even Luke...in the Bible we know that names often have meaning.

But the other disciple remains unnamed... Un-named because this space is reserved for us. You are the other disciple on this road to Emmaus.

...And all of us travel this uncertain road at various times in our lives.

For some of us it's by our choice: maybe you've let go of something that was no longer working... or you walked away from something toxic in your life...and at other times you have no choice...loss of a job, end of a relationship, your child moves away...or the death of someone close.

Here we leave the familiar...or it has left us. The way that we lived and understood our lives to be has changed. Something new will happen but we can't quite see it yet...we are on the Road to Emmaus...the threshold of something new out there in the distance.

This is a time of waiting, and for the disciples it was a time of processing things out as well. Good thing they had each other and weren't alone taking that long walk from Jerusalem. That's tempting for many of us. When we experience this kind of upheaval many of us want to retreat from the world. It's too painful and too intimate! I want to go off to be by myself!

It's natural for many of us when we go through personal trauma. We don't open up. But these two went together and they discussed the stuff of their lives. All the things that had happened. All of it...not just the facts but how all of this was affecting them.

What's happening deep down inside... especially their loss of hope...or their vision for what they thought their future would look like.

I can't imagine life on the other side of this! I can't make meaning out of it! And while these two are having THAT kind of conversation...the

uncomfortable, honest, intimate conversation that's when a stranger enters into their midst. That's when Jesus comes near!

And these two were not praying, or worshipping, or having a small group discussion... it was just an ordinary moment in the lives of two friends walking down the road... discussing the deeper stuff... the pain of their lives. Now that's the kind of conversation that Jesus wants to get involved in...and also notice that these two disciples didn't shoo this stranger away or blow him off!

Jesus starts out with a question of invitation. What are you two talkin' about!? Of course Jesus knew, but that wasn't the point was it? God always reaches out to us...and it's an invitation that we get to choose...whether to accept...or not.

Now here Jesus is also hinting at ...so what are you two maybe NOT talkin' about... what still remains hidden within your hearts?

Jesus intrudes upon their conversation because he knew something they did not...He knew that they needed to tell their own story. He respected their own experience of what happened that weekend. Even when we go through something together, we all have different ways of experiencing it, don't we? Different points of view...different ways of processing things out.

We all come to feel and experience sadness and pain differently.

It's not easy for us to talk about intimate pain...in fact the two disciples looking quite sad are joined by a sad looking Jesus...He entered into their sadness with empathy and compassion...open posture = agape

He didn't rush in with his own interpretation, He didn't try to fix anything...Instead Jesus played dumb!

So they respond incredulously...are you the only one in all Jerusalem that doesn't know what happened?! Are you clueless?

He asks again, what things...giving them once again a chance to express the things that are weighing on them...a chance to process what has happened without offering judgement, perspective, opinion or problem solving...He was just present with them...present without feeling the need to fill up that uncomfortable space.

Jesus allows them that space, he allows them room to process...to get down into the heart of the matter...see we had hoped (fill in the blank for yourself) and now THAT hope is lost...we thought Jesus was the real deal but now we don't know anymore...lost expectations, lost hopes, lost dreams.

Then after Jesus just listens, he simply refers to scripture in such a way as to touch their needs and help them make sense out of things from a larger, spiritual point of view...

See He helps them to find their story in God's story. Your little story and experience is woven into God's bigger story. The greater thing.

Sometimes we see people that have gone through tragedy, and in needing to make meaning out of it, eventually turn outwards to serve a greater purpose... transforming their pain into something larger than themselves. See your story always fits into a bigger story...but most times, we can't see it for a while... or until God reveals it to us!

...and also notice that Jesus points out to them an essential rhythm to our spiritual life. That the spiritual life always involves death, burial and resurrection. That is the rhythm of creation. In order to grow we will need to die to things...then there will be a period of waiting.... the burial...the dark place...then resurrection... something new is created and comes forth!

Death – a stripping away, Burial a time of waiting and being unsure, but then there is always that resurrection on the other side!!! Living a life more as your true self in God.

Jesus provides meaning to their story...and this is what it looks like for us all! This is how all our lives unfold.

Is it hard? yep... does it hurt? Like hell... but it's sometimes necessary...because this is usually how something new comes forth in our lives...it's the nature of change!

That doesn't mean we minimize the suffering, pain, transition and death...THIS IS NOT EASY FOR ANYONE!

As human beings we need time and space to process what it means to strive for permanence in an ever changing universe in constant motion.

But God waits... and God brings meaning...and when YOU find meaning in your suffering or in your transitions...WOW that changes everything doesn't it!? That's what changes the world!

Now it doesn't take away the pain...but all of a sudden there is meaning and a purpose in it...and that makes it possible to go on... to live in this new place that has now opened up for us... through letting go of the familiar.

What a gift that Jesus gave them...helping them find meaning in all that they had just been through and to restore HOPE for them going forward!

Nelson Mandela said it like this: “ May your choices reflect your hopes... not your fears.” Change – met with Fear or Love...those opposite postures...when something life changing happens to us are we closed or are we open...and then how do we move forward when things are not clear.

And you don't have to do it alone either...and authentic conversation is so life giving! So now these two disciples urge Jesus to stay with them...and in another ordinary moment, in sharing a simple meal, their

eyes are opened! They had no idea it was Jesus right there with them in their midst...God right there with them in their sadness and suffering.

...and as soon as they recognize Jesus he vanishes from their sight...and didn't their hearts burn!?

Isn't there moments like that for all of us? God-incidents? OMG I think I just met God or an angel (angelos means messenger).

For myself when I attended my Education for Ministry classes right here at this church, we would write our spiritual autobiographies...when I looked back over my life...it became clear to me all the times God had showed up in my life.

...and it was usually while walking through my own desserts and in my own in between times...the painful times...and these things were transformative for me...without my own Road to Emmaus experiences I would not be here before you today...that's for sure!

In sharing our ordinary stories about our ordinary lives we begin to notice God showing up all over the place...that our story and God's are intertwined!

So practice presence & awareness and you will see God showing up all over, especially in those times between the now and the not yet.

And when their hearts burned, full of the Spirit did they go to sleep? NO they ran back 7 miles to Jerusalem to share their meeting with Jesus...and guess what...they weren't the only ones... they heard the other disciple's stories of how they too saw Jesus...that's the way of witness and transformation. Telling our stories of how we met God to one another...that's what we do here at church.

Many times we meet Jesus just by inviting the stranger into your midst...angels unaware! ...and Jesus enters into that space to bring us the peace that passes all understanding...and now YOU also become witnesses of the living God showing up in your own lives!

So go now and share your stories of how God has touched your life... Become bearers of good news who can hardly wait to tell others about what has happened upon your road to Emmaus.

And so may God give you the grace and courage to talk with one another about where you have been. May you come to recognize the presence of Jesus in your midst...even when it's dark...especially when it's dark!

May you share your stories with one another and the world so that in doing so you will see your story intertwined within God's story.

And may your hearts burn with the Spirit of the living God among you...for the Lord has risen...The Lord has Risen indeed in you and me...Alleluia Alleluia!

Your faithful servant,

carmen

ASIDE!

Choose to Walk and Stay together...especially in the wilderness and in the pain.

Choose to listen to each other...not to fix or to give advice or to problem solve, or give your own interpretations...choose to simply be present for one another.

Open your hands to let go and to receive Jesus' presence more deeply into our private and corporate lives on the road between the now and the not yet.

Choose to welcome the stranger...welcome the interruption...for that's when and how God show's up (There is no story here without it)!

Keep coming back to scripture and finding your story within it.

Establish patterns for paying attention...look for the extraordinary in the ordinary! Look for those moments when your heart burned within you and then share it with others...and notice the presence of God with you.

For Jesus will bring you His peace, and His transforming presence into our lives.

For you are witnesses of these things!

