

Luke 24:13-35

There are lots of people here in Western Wisconsin who like to **walk**, and it has become even **more** prominent since the COVID-19 pandemic started. Doctors and other medical personnel say that walking is **good** for you - in fact, it's one of the **best** exercises you can **do** to stay physically **healthy**. In order to help keep ourselves **spiritually** healthy, we walked with **Jesus** throughout the six weeks of **Lent**. In our text for this Sunday, we have two people who went for a **long** walk - not because it was the **healthy** thing to do, but just because that's how people got **around** in those days. Luke tells us that their destination - **Emmaus** - was about **seven miles** from Jerusalem. That **seems** to be a **contradiction**, because there doesn't appear to be a town called Emmaus which is 7 miles from Jerusalem. **Resolving** the apparent contradiction in **this** case is **easy**. It may be that archaeologists simply haven't **found** this town yet, and that's why we don't **know** about it. On the other hand, perhaps a more **plausible** explanation is the fact that there **is** a town called **Emmaus** about 3 1/2 miles from Jerusalem. Therefore, Luke may be talking about the distance for a **round trip**. Either way, Luke's words stand **correct**, just as he stated them. At any rate, as these men were **walking**, they met **Jesus** - and in the course of the ensuing conversation, their long **physical** walk turned into something much **greater** - it became a part of **The Long Walk Of Faith** - a walk which takes us through **confusion** and **hopelessness**, into **fellowship** and **eternal joy**.

Our text begins, "*Now, on that same day, two of **them** were going to a village named **Emmaus**, about **seven miles** from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about all of these things that had **happened**.*" Who **were** these people? Our text says it was two of **them**, but two of **whom**? Luke is the only writer who includes this account on the road to **Emmaus**, and he records it immediately after the women had told Peter, John, and the disciples who were **with** them, that an angel had told them that Jesus had **risen** from the dead. It was two of these **disciples** - people who were **not** included among Jesus' chosen **12** disciples, but who were nevertheless His **followers** - two of **these** were on their way **home** to Emmaus. They had **heard** from the women that Jesus had **risen**, but they had not **believed** it.

It quickly becomes clear how **confused** and **hopeless** these people had become when **Jesus Himself** comes up and walks along **with** them - although for one reason or another they were unable to **recognize** Him. At any rate, when Jesus asks them what they've been **talking** about our text tells us, "***Saddened**, they **stopped** ... 'The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth ... We were **hoping** that he was going to redeem Israel.'*" That's what they **had** hoped - but **now** their hopes were **dashed**. Perhaps they had expected some good news right **away**, **immediately**

following Jesus' crucifixion - or possibly on the **next** day - but as they said, "*It is now the **third day** since these things happened.*" They considered their quest for the Messiah to be **over**. It was time to stop **waiting** and **hoping**, and to make the long walk **home**.

These two people were focusing far too much on their own **human** reason. What they **needed** to do was to focus on **God's Word**, and on the **sure promises** which are **recorded** there. So, that's exactly what Jesus **led** them to do, and that's where their journey took a turn for the **better**. Their long walk home became an opportunity for **Bible Study**. Again in our text we are told, "*He said to them, 'How **foolish** you are and slow of heart to **believe** all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ **have** to suffer these things and to enter his **glory**?' Then beginning with **Moses** and all the **prophets**, he **explained** to them what was said in **all the Scriptures** concerning himself."*

These disciples were receiving an **attitude adjustment** from their Savior. No doubt Jesus began with the first Book of Moses - **Genesis** - and the very **first** promise of a Savior to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden - the one where God said to Satan, "*I will put **hostility** between you and the woman, and between your seed and **her seed**. He will **crush your head**, and you will crush his heel.*" Certainly Jesus would **also** have led them through the promises which God had made to **Abraham** and the **other** patriarchs, and on into the numerous prophecies found in the **Psalms**, as well as those which were revealed to **prophets** like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. There are **hundreds** of prophecies from which to **choose** - prophecies which would lead these disciples out of their **confusion** and **hopelessness**, and into a state of confident **trust** - but not **yet**.

The **next** step in this **Long Walk Of Faith** involved a **continuing** study of God's Word. Our text tells us, "*As they approached the village where they were going, he acted as if he were going to travel **farther**. But they urged him **strongly**, saying, 'Stay with us, since it is almost **evening**, and the day is almost over.'* So he went in to **stay** with them." Although it was getting **dark**, and the road would certainly be **dangerous**, especially for someone travelling **alone**, their **main** reason for urging Him to stay with them was that He had piqued their **interest** through His thorough knowledge of **God's Word**. Isn't it interesting how this Stranger who had at first **imposed** Himself on their rather **private** conversation, had now become a **Teacher** and **Friend** from whom they wanted to learn much **more**! They were not about to let this dynamic **Stranger** get away. He would **have** to stay for **supper**.

The **fellowship** which **followed** is really quite **similar** to some of the

fellowship which we **still** love to experience. I find it rather interesting that even in **Jesus' day**, people who had gathered together around **God's Word**, were **also** drawn together to spend some time partaking of **food** - kind of like our coffee and **snacks** following our worship services, or our pot-luck **dinners** - or even our Easter **breakfast** - things which we hope to get **back** to again very **soon**. Feeding the **body** fits together very **naturally** with feeding the **soul**.

It was in this breaking of **bread** that the two disciples finally **recognized** that this **Stranger** was no stranger at **all** - it was Jesus **Himself!** There are a couple of interpretations which are offered to explain why **that action** triggered their recognition. The **first** is that as Jesus broke the bread, it was the first time these disciples were able to clearly see Jesus' **hands**. And when they saw the fresh **nail prints**, it immediately gave away His identity. However a **second** interpretation is **equally** as believable. I'm sure that **all** of you have had the experience of seeing someone who looked **familiar** to you, but you couldn't quite come up with a **name** for them. It may have been because they were in an unfamiliar location, or perhaps they weren't with their spouse and children, or perhaps they were dressed in formal attire instead of casually. This **could** be what had happened to the **disciples**. This man **looked** somewhat **familiar**, but since they weren't accustomed to seeing Jesus travel by **Himself**, and since they were only too aware that Jesus had **died** on the cross, they weren't expecting to **see Him** on their way to Emmaus. But when Jesus broke **bread** with them - something He had done with them on **numerous** occasions - it was the final **key** which unlocked His **identity** for them.

Anyway, as soon as they figured it out, Jesus was **gone**. Our text says, "***Suddenly their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. Then he vanished from their sight.***" It's likely that **we** would think this would have confused the disciples even **more**. But it **didn't**. Instead, they were filled with new **strength** and **zeal**. We're told, "***They got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem.***" They made the 3 1/2 or 7 mile journey **again**, in order to tell the **other** disciples that the story which the women had brought earlier was **true** - Jesus really **had** risen from the dead, and they had **seen** Him with their own eyes. Jesus had **restored** to them the **joy** of their salvation.

What a turnaround for these disciples, as they traveled **The Long Walk Of Faith**. But friends, it's the same walk which **we** make on a daily basis. The walk of **coming** to faith and **becoming** a Christian is not long at **all**. **That** happened in an **instant**, at the moment of our **baptism**. But once we **have** our faith, **living** in it becomes a **long** walk - a **life-long** walk. Our **Long Walk Of Faith** also leads us **through** confusion and hopelessness, and **into** fellowship and eternal joy. When our

spirits are **sagging** and our hope has been **destroyed** - when our patience is being severely **tried** and our goals appear to be **unattainable** - what a **blessing** it is to know that we are on **The Long Walk Of Faith** with thousands of **other** like-minded believers - people who not only understand that Jesus suffered and **died** to pay for all our sins, but that He has also **risen** from the dead, and lives and rules **eternally**. What a **joy** it is to be able to share our **sorrows** and **woes** with them. And very **soon**, I hope to receive the **comfort** and **encouragement** of being able to gather here at Trinity **every week** with like-minded believers, so we can grow together in learning **more** about our precious Savior. That of course **includes** being able to gather here at the **Lord's Table**, as we celebrate **close communion** - enjoying the **intimate unity** we have - and regularly receiving the assurance that **all** our sins have been taken away through the blood of Jesus. Dear friends, you and I are on the **same path** - and what is **most important**, **Jesus** is on that path **with** us. We are walking with **Jesus** throughout **all** the days of our **lives**. Therefore, even in our **darkest** moments, Jesus will continue to **reveal** Himself to us through His **Word** and **Sacrament**, and He will **restore** to **us** the **joy** of our salvation. The **Walk Of Faith** may be a **Long Walk**, but it is the **only** walk which leads to our heavenly home. Let's thank God that we will once again be **privileged** to do our walking **together**. Amen.