

Third Sunday of Easter April 6

Readings: Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Psalm 116:1-3,10-17; 1 Peter 1:17-23;
Luke 24:13-35

On the first day of the week, we are on the road to Emmaus. We have left Jerusalem. Things are not safe there for followers. We walk in silence for a while. What happened has made us strangers to each other. We are not sure if we agree. As we talk, we begin to see, we begin to understand.

On the road to Emmaus. Interesting to note --- then is no Emmaus on the map. The word Emmaus means "in the plain country".

We are leaving the hospital. We watched the suffering and the death. We walk to the car in silence. We sit in the car in silence. I drive toward nowhere. I drive simply to be moving --- to continue to be among the living. What we have lived through has made us strangers to one another. All those years together and we have no idea what to say to each other.

"You know, for all his craziness, I really loved him". We begin the stories, stories we both know and stories only she knows. Soon we drive back to his house.

We have all been on the road to Emmaus. We have lived through the impossible. And now what? It's on the road that we choose the next step. Bob Dylan described a generation --- "a complete unknown, with no direction home, like a rolling stone".

In our Baptism service, we will be asked a very important question --- "Will you be responsible for seeing that the child you present is brought up in the Christian faith and life?"

When you and I and all the children are hit with all that the world can dish out, what will come to them on the road to Emmaus? What carefully planted message will roll the stone away? What will be the message heard after the impossible happens? What will direct the next steps?

Will we be responsible for seeing that the children are brought up in the Christian faith and life? This is one of our church's reasons for being. The Christian faith and life is clear. Receive and give and become compassion, mercy, forgiveness and justice --- we in Him and He in us.

He grew up in an athletic family. Work out, practice, improve, win, hustle, never quit. What message is planted? When loss or an injury or bad refs or tragic events enter the arena, what will be the message?

In the mountains last week, she told about being abandoned by her biological mother and disliked by her adopted mother. The first 20 years were filled with risky behavior trying to attract a mother. It didn't work. On the road to Emmaus, she got help; she took control of her life. Education, Masters in Social Work, teaching at Columbia. Of course, an Episcopalian. She says, "Now, here I am retired, living in the mountains. I'm volunteering at the hospital, tutoring at the school, helping at the library while folks nearby sit and read day after day". Then she says, "I can't see to shake this inner message to help others".

We have all heard the stories of Jesus. We know the Christian faith and life. And yet, when fear, insecurity, hopelessness, threat and anger are present, we may, like the followers of Jesus, retreat for a while. During this break, do we plan our revenge, fantasize the destruction of those evil doers, do we make a bigger wall? Or, do we return to Jerusalem? Do we go toward the fears and threats carrying compassion and mercy and forgiveness and justice?

For the disciples, for the followers and for us, the call is to meet Jesus in Jerusalem. He is not in the peaceful garden. He is not in repose. The living presence of God will place our faith in a head-on collision with powers and principalities. We will not win. The question --- will we do our living and dying as disciples or will we live and die in the beautiful courts of the righteous?

Christianity doesn't take American Express. Engaged faith and action is the call. Will we be responsible for seeing that all of us live in the Christian faith and life?

We are not on the road to nowhere. We are on the road to Jerusalem, on the road to where different powers, different religions, different races contend with each others. And what we bring to the arena are wimpy little torches of compassion and justice, little branches of mercy and forgiveness.

Yet we have our fight song --- "He is risen! He is risen indeed!" Amen.

Rev. Will Hinson
April 6, 2008