

“Table Fellowship”

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Genesis 18:1-15

Luke 24:13-35

*Then they told what had happened on the road,  
and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.*

*Luke 24:35*

Let us pray... O God,

Thank you for your abundant generosity  
to us as a congregation

Thank you for this building where we can gather to worship and fellowship together  
and thank you for the people here who make up who we are as a congregation.

Amen

The Emmaus story is my favorite story of the Bible –

I love the elements of journey and homecoming.

I especially love the image of Jesus sitting down at a table with his disciples,  
breaking bread with them at the moment they recognize  
who this really is sitting there.

In classic Western art, this particular scene is portrayed dramatically –  
almost comically, as the disciples appear thunderstruck by this realization.

To me, this scene represents the “historical event” of the Resurrection –  
when people were transformed from despair to joy  
and set about to bring the Good News into the world with determination.

Folks, that is why we are here today sitting in a building named after Christ.  
Something happened back then to turn those devastated and defeated people  
into determined messengers of the “Good News”.

Actually, I love the whole 24<sup>th</sup> chapter of Luke  
because it has the whole Gospel message woven into it.

It’s all there - all the elements of Jesus’ story are there, explicitly and implicitly:  
crucifixion, resurrection, salvation, forgiveness, baptism - of the Spirit,  
the ‘table fellowship’ of communion, a model for early evangelism,  
liberation – especially the advocacy of women, victory, healing, humor,  
justice and peace, as well as journey and homecoming.

It is on the journey that we see the effects that the Crucifixion  
had on these followers of Jesus as they drifted away from Jerusalem,  
still perplexed and grieving over what happened there.

The word ‘behold’ is conspicuously absent  
when the resurrected Christ shows up to walk along  
with the despondent disciples.

Willard, p.2

By the way, contemporary scholars speculate these two were husband & wife, Cleopus & Mary.

That is in contrast with the traditional interpretation that they were men and that this unnamed disciple walking with Cleopus was Luke – the author of this gospel, who also shows up as one of the apostles in the Book of Acts.

Still, if these two disciples *were* both men, it would clarify Jesus' admonition,  
*"O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe  
all that the prophets have spoken!"*

This would refer back to the beginning of Luke 24, when Mary Magdalene and some of the other women disciples learned of Jesus' Resurrection.

They had gone to Jesus' tomb to anoint his body on the third day after his death and the day after the Sabbath.

To their surprise, the large rock was rolled away and inside the tomb, Jesus' body was gone and they encounter two angelic messengers who tell them that he has 'risen!'

Then, they run to report this to the disciples – who disregard their words as an "idle women's tale"...

We see this tension of men not accepting the women's testimony as a continuing trend in the history of the Church – despite Jesus' implied affirmation of women's prophetic role:  
*"O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe  
all that the prophets have spoken!"*

As the disciples walk along with this stranger – who is physically unrecognizable to them at this point, they enter into a kind of walking Bible study.

Christ leads the discussion using examples from Moses' Law of the Torah and the teachings of the Prophets.

These people back in the First Century CE walked everywhere, so they were probably in pretty good shape.

Still, on any long walk, it is nice to have someone to talk with to pass the time.

Before they know it, the two disciples are at their destination of Emmaus about seven miles away from Jerusalem.

However, their companion seems to be going further,

He has apparently gained their trust and appreciation – no doubt for helping them comes to terms with their grief through someone who has a hopeful insight to these terrible and wonderful events.

Willard, p.3

So they call to him and urge him to stay with them

as it is getting late to find food and shelter for the evening.

He readily accepts their offer and goes with them.

It is not clear whether they entered an inn or someone's home.

First century homes in Palestine did have guest rooms for travelers –

who were more likely relatives, otherwise they stayed in the manger

which was a place for their animals that was also connected to the house.

<http://www.biblearchaeology.org/post/2008/11/08/The-Manger-and-the-Inn.aspx>

They would have reclined to eat together as was the custom back then

and someone would have blessed the food.

Here's the blessing for bread:

*Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe,*

*Who brings forth bread from the earth.*

[http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/90551/jewish/Texts-of-Blessings-Before-Eating.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/90551/jewish/Texts-of-Blessings-Before-Eating.htm)

*Baruch a-tah, Adonai, Eloeinu melech haolam.*

*Hamotzi lechem min Ha-aretz. Amen*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITxfUOlsIfI>

It was not by his appearance, but by how he did the blessing and broke the bread

to give to the disciples that they finally figured out who this was –

and then he vanished from their sight!

In their astonishment,

they recollect how he made them feel as they walked together on the road,

deep in discussion about things theological,

setting aside their pain for the time being.

Then they got up and raced back to Jerusalem that hour –

or was it within an hour?

Athletes these days can run a mile under 4 minutes – that is, *one* mile in a race.

Generally, a fit person walks a mile in about 15 minutes.

If these disciples cover 7 miles in an hour,

that means they are doing 8 ½ minute miles!

They are cookin' and they are no longer disciples –

but are now apostles, because they are going somewhere with a message.

When they get to the upper room in Jerusalem,

where the other disciples were hiding and where the Last Supper took place,

before they can get a word out of their mouths,

they are told that Christ appeared to Peter by the Sea of Galilee.

Peter's forgiveness and reconciliation with Jesus is implied

and the story of that encounter is fully told in Gospel of John, chapter 21.

Willard, p.4

When the two apostles from Emmaus finally get to tell  
how they met Christ on the road and didn't know it  
until they were at table and he broke the bread,  
Jesus reappeared to them all, saying,  
"Shalom, shalom! Peace be with you! Salaam aleikum!"

They are stunned and frightened – not because they are afraid of Jesus,  
but because they don't want to be disappointed.

Finally, to break the silence, Jesus says,  
"Do you have anything here to eat?"

Keep in mind now, he hadn't had any of that bread in Emmaus –  
after he did the blessing and broke the bread, he slipped away.

They gave him some fish to eat and by doing so  
he demonstrated his presence in a real way for them to see.

He reaffirms that his words and deeds are a fulfillment of scripture  
and that they as his apostles will be empowered by the Spirit of God  
to go forth and proclaim repentance and forgiveness in Jesus' name.

Christ leads them out of Jerusalem to Bethany,  
where he blesses his followers as he is taken away from them into Heaven.

Luke 24 ends with the apostles going back to Jerusalem, to praise God continuously,  
and it seems that is where they would have stayed.

It is believed that Luke the Evangelist was also the author of the Book of Acts  
which begins with Jesus' ascension to Heaven.

The story picks up from there to tell how the apostles were persecuted  
and pushed out of Jerusalem to bring the Good News into the world.

When Jesus had sent the 72 to go before him on his journey to Jerusalem,  
he told them to take no extra sandals, or clothes, or even money,  
but to go two by two into the villages,  
to seek refuge at homes and become helpful guests.

They went as skilled missionaries who could heal people and teach them to pray;  
They would know the songs and stories and rituals of the faith;

They would share in simple table fellowship with the families who took them in–  
and that this would be practice for what it would take

after Jesus had departed from them,  
to plant communities of faith in God through Christ.

That is how the Church started and how it will keep going...

*Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe,  
Who brings forth bread from the earth.*

*Baruch a-tah, Adonai, Eloeinu melech haolam.*

*\_Hamotzi -lechem min Ha-aretz.*

Amen

*Our lesson today from Genesis 18:1-15 tells about the day when*

*Abraham & Sarah entertained more than ‘angels unawares’ and  
learned that they would finally have a child...*

<sup>1</sup>The LORD appeared to Abraham at the oaks of Mamre  
while he sat at the entrance of his tent in the day’s heat.

<sup>2</sup> He looked up and suddenly saw three men standing near him.

As soon as he saw them, he ran from his tent entrance to greet them  
and bowed deeply.

<sup>3</sup> He said,

“Sirs, if you would be so kind, don’t just pass by your servant.

<sup>4</sup> Let a little water be brought so you may wash your feet  
and refresh yourselves under the tree.

<sup>5</sup> Let me offer you a little bread so you will feel stronger,  
and after that you may leave your servant and go on your way—  
since you have visited your servant.”

They responded,

“Fine. Do just as you have said.”

<sup>6</sup> So Abraham hurried to Sarah at his tent and said,

“Hurry! Knead [five gallons] of the finest flour  
and make some baked goods!”

<sup>7</sup> Abraham ran to the cattle, took a healthy young calf,  
and gave it to a young servant, who prepared it quickly.

<sup>8</sup> Then Abraham took butter, milk, and the calf that had been prepared,  
put the food in front of them, and stood under the tree near them as they ate.

<sup>9</sup> They said to him,

“Where’s your wife Sarah?”

And he said,

“Right here in the tent.”

<sup>10</sup> Then one of the men said,

“I will definitely return to you about this time next year.  
Then your wife Sarah will have a son!”

Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him.

<sup>11</sup> Now Abraham and Sarah were both very old.  
Sarah was no longer menstruating.

<sup>12</sup> So Sarah laughed to herself, thinking,

I’m no longer able to have children and my husband’s old.

<sup>13</sup> The LORD said to Abraham,

“Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Me give birth? At my age?’

<sup>14</sup> Is anything too difficult for the LORD?

When I return to you about this time next year, Sarah will have a son.”

<sup>15</sup> Sarah lied and said,

“I didn’t laugh,” because she was frightened.

But he said, “No, you laughed.”

*Let us be challenged and guided by these words...*

Luke 24:13-35

<sup>13</sup> That very day two of them were going to a village named Emma'us,  
about seven miles from Jerusalem,

<sup>14</sup> and talking with each other about all these things  
that had happened.

<sup>15</sup> While they were talking and discussing together,  
Jesus himself drew near and went with them.

<sup>16</sup> But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

<sup>17</sup> And he said to them,

“What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk?”  
And they stood still, looking sad.

<sup>18</sup> Then one of them, named Cle'opas, answered him,

“Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things  
that have happened there in these days?”

<sup>19</sup> And he said to them,

“What things?”

And they said to him,

“Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word  
before God and all the people,

<sup>20</sup> and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up  
to be condemned to death, and crucified him.

<sup>21</sup> But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.  
Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since this happened.

<sup>22</sup> Moreover, some women of our company amazed us.

They were at the tomb early in the morning

<sup>23</sup> and did not find his body; and they came back saying that  
they had even seen a vision of angels,  
who said that he was alive.

<sup>24</sup> Some of those who were with us went to the tomb,  
and found it just as the women had said;  
but him they did not see.”

<sup>25</sup> And he said to them,

“O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe  
all that the prophets have spoken!

<sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things  
and enter into his glory?”

<sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the prophets,  
he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

<sup>28</sup> So they drew near to the village to which they were going.

He appeared to be going further, <sup>29</sup> but they constrained him, saying,  
“Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.”

So he went in to stay with them.

30 When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them.

31 And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight.

32 They said to each other,

“Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?”

33 And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven gathered together and those who were with them, 34 who said,

“The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!”

35 Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.