

"Kairos Journey"

Sermon by Lisa Crismore

April 26, 2020 – John Knox Presbyterian Church

Luke 2:14-35

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" He asked them "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him." The he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Today, we find ourselves on a seven-mile journey to a town called Emmaus. This wonderful story that invites us to join these two men as they are returning home. We are walking with Cleopas and an unnamed disciple. You see it is not two weeks after Easter but it is actually the same day that the women went to the tomb to discover Jesus was not there but was told that he was alive! The men really don't believe it because they have not seen it for themselves. We can only imagine that their anxiety levels are on over drive and they are deeply distressed by their loss. As they are hiking on the road, they use this time to process the events that have led up to this point. They are retelling the horrible ordeal of Jesus' arrest, unfair trial, beatings, crucifixion and death. And in between all this, there is no doubt that they are wondering what is going to happen next. What will they do once they return home? Will life ever be normal again? Will they be safe to leave their home or go to Jerusalem? Will the pain and fear ever end? Will the leaders of the church or the Roman government be looking for them? If things change, which they most certainly will, what will the new normal be for these men, the city of Jerusalem, their community and the world? **What comes next?**

It is fascinating how scripture has a sense of coming to us at just the right time. As we walk with these men, we can relate to their fears and anxiety about what comes next? We have been in quarantine for the last four weeks and some of us a lot longer. We wonder what our world will be like once our city and businesses begin to re-open. Will it be safe to go outside our home? Has our

world as we knew it changed and will there be a new normal? There has been great loss and hardship.

- Some have lost loved ones.
- Some have lost their jobs.
- Some have struggled to pay bills because their hours of work have been cut.
- Some have lost their dreams of starting a new business.
- Some have found their mental state challenged beyond belief.
- Some have suffered from domestic abuse.
- Some have worked around the clock to care for others.
- Some have found it difficult being isolated from others. They have felt like a prisoner in their homes.
- Some have missed celebrating with their classmates' special milestones in their lives.
- Some have felt guilty wishing they could do more.
- Some have been ill but survived.

The list can go on and on. We are travelling our own road to Emmaus. We can totally relate to the disciples and questioning, "What comes next?"

In the midst of the questioning, processing and fear, comes Jesus. Now, Cleopas and the disciple with no-name doesn't recognize that this is Jesus. It is though their fear and anxiety has caused them to lose their sight when it comes to Jesus. Perhaps, they are wearing their coronavirus over their eyes instead of their mouth and nose! This causes them to see Jesus as a stranger and they are quite surprised that he has no idea of what has been going on in Jerusalem. It is like many of us going to the grocery store and wondering why people aren't wearing masks and staying six-feet away from each other at all times. I want to say, "Where have you been? Don't you know this is serious?"

Yet, Jesus knows that it is serious. He hears them say that they had hoped that Jesus would be the **Messiah that would redeem Israel**. Jesus responds to their hopelessness by opening up scripture to them. He speaks of Moses and the prophets. It is no doubt that they have heard these stories told to them since they were children. It is their tradition and faith built from those grass roots that Jesus connects with them.

This connection has to ignite something in the two disciples because as they reach their doorstep in Emmaus, they stop Jesus as he is about to head on down the path. Cleopas and his friend invite Jesus to come in to eat and stay with them as the day is drawing to an end.

As they sit down to break bread, Jesus blesses it, breaks it and hands it to them. Finally, their eyes are opened – the mask is lifted and they recognize him! Yes, one might say they are slow. The processing of putting everything together finally comes to fruition. They have seen the risen Lord!

I don't know about you but I can relate to the disciples. There are times where I am not quick on my feet to put it all together. I need someone to talk things through and sometimes I do it with myself. Oops! I think I just admitted that I talk to myself. There are times when I can have several conversations with someone and hours later I am still processing what was said, wishing I had said this or that. This was something BIG! It was going to take time to process this. Yet, there was Jesus in that Kairos moment or walk or journey and he revealed himself to the disciples.

I loved what one commentator said, "It was in the breaking of the bread that the broken faith was nursed back to life." (Feasting on the Word – Year A, Volume 2; by Shannon Michael Pater; Westminster John Knox Press; 2010; p. 422) This was a Kairos moment – a God moment. The disciples had journeyed back home to find something amazing!

This ignited spark sent them not to bed but all the way back to Jerusalem to tell the others. They were so excited that they couldn't sleep. This new found energy sent them to tell the other

disciples that Jesus was alive! That everything, even though things will change (how could it not?), all will be okay because there is new life and new hope!

What will ignite us? Where and when will we find our spark of hope – our Kairos moment? As we journey on our coronavirus trail, we are questioning, processing, wondering. It is a bag of mixed emotions as we travel the unknown.

I have heard from several people that they don't dare turn on the television but tune into the news for a few short minutes to get an update on things. Then, there are others, who seem to have to watch it around the clock. Wherever you fall on the spectrum, Luke is inviting us to open our eyes, connect with our faith. Perhaps, we are the un-named disciple who is about to experience that Kairos moment.

This past week, there was something extraordinary happened when Governor Cuomo did his daily news conference on Friday. He shared a Kairos moment that I believe has been shared repeatedly. But, just like the stories in the Bible about everyday people, I believe this one is worth retelling.

Mr. Cuomo received a handwritten letter from a retired farmer who is hunkered down in his home in Northeastern Kansas with his wife. They are both in their seventies. The farmer shares that he doesn't believe that the governor will ever read this letter because he is so busy addressing this disaster that has fallen on our nation. His wife only has one lung and sometimes has problems with the remaining lung. In the letter, he sent one unused N-95 mask, explaining that he had this leftover from his farming days. He has kept four for the couple to use but wanted the governor to give this one to a doctor or nurse in New York to use. (<https://www.nydailynews.com/coronavirus/ny-coronavirus-kansas-couple-mask-cuomo-20200424-adgfgkgaardwhcnkccmj3q2otq-story.html>)

After sharing the letter with our nation, the governor asks, "How beautiful is that? How selfless is that and how giving is that? It is that love and that courage that generosity of spirit that makes this country so beautiful." To me, this is a Kairos moment. The breaking of the bread that nurses the broken faith. We all have heard these touching stories. I read on Facebook that Patty McKinnon sent Emily Viefhaus a surprise birthday package in the mail. This will be something that Emily will remember for the rest of her life! These stories are Kairos moment. God working through people, giving us a spark of energy, warming our hearts so that we can have hope and find new life.

Thanks be to God for the disciples who invited Jesus into their home and didn't let him walk on down the path. Amen!