

Luke 24:13-35

¹³Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then 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?” ¹⁹He 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, ²⁰and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and 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. ²⁴Some 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.” ²⁵Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They 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?” ³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Revealed in Bread

April 30, 2017

There is a wonderful story about a little boy who decided he wanted to find God. He knew it would probably be a long trip, so he decided to pack a lunch -- four packs of potato chips and two juice boxes. He set out on his journey and walked a few streets until he came to a park. On one of the park benches sat an old woman looking at the pigeons.

The little boy sat down beside her and watched the pigeons too. When he grew hungry, he pulled out some chips. As he ate, he noticed the woman watching him, so he offered her one. She accepted it gratefully and smiled at him. He thought she had the most beautiful smile in the world. Wanting to see it again, he opened a juice box and offered her the other. Once again, she smiled that beautiful smile.

For a long time the two sat on that park bench eating potato chips and drinking juice boxes, smiling at each other, and watching the pigeons. Neither said a word. Finally, the little boy realized that it was getting late and he needed to go home. He started to leave, took a few steps, turned back and gave the woman a big hug. Her smile was brighter than ever before.

When he arrived home, his mother noticed that he was happy, but strangely quiet. 'What did you do today?' she asked. 'Oh, I had lunch in the park with God,' he said. Before his mother could reply he added, 'You know, she has the most beautiful smile in the world.'

Meanwhile, the woman left the park and returned home. Back in her apartment, her son noticed something different about her. He was often worried about her for she often seemed vague and not quite with it. 'What did you do today, Mom?' he asked. 'Oh, I ate potato chips and drank juice in the park with God.' And before her son could say anything at all, she added, 'You know, God's a lot younger than I had imagined.'

As we journey these next few weeks toward Pentecost we will enjoy reading about the many encounters the disciples and others had with the risen Christ. They are often surprising and he seems to disappear as quickly as he arrives, much to their, and our discomfort.

This morning's reading is just such an occasion and truth be told is one of my favorite stories. I love the image of the breaking of the bread and the realization that Jesus was among them. That they didn't know who he was until then and how their hearts burned within them as he explained the scriptures to them. And it has me thinking about the many ways that we experience the risen Jesus when we share a meal or 'break bread' as we used to say.

In my lifetime, which hasn't been that long yet, only 63 years, I've often heard people bemoaning the state of the world and society. Citing various reasons for our demise, from bad parenting to too much affluence, no respect for elders, to things being made too cheaply. Lax morality to communism. But if I could cite one thing that I think has influenced the course of our culture more than anything, I would lay the blame solely at the feet of the TV Table. The day we started eating in front of the television and stopped talking to each other is probably the day we missed it when Jesus showed up for dinner and nobody noticed. I'm only being half serious, but I think you understand my point. We often don't take time when breaking bread to share our lives with one another and I think we miss so much when we neglect to sit and listen and look for God.

When did you last take time to sit with someone and talk about the many ways that God is working in your life? When was the last time you were surprised by the Divine in your midst? And it can sometimes be a complete stranger, just as Jesus was in our story this morning. It was when those on the road welcomed this stranger into their brokenness, and into their home, and to their dinner table, that Jesus was revealed. I'm sure there is a lesson there for us all. Particularly in this era of "Stranger Danger" that permeates our society and politics.

And how was he revealed? It was when he took bread and blessed it and broke it. Something he had done so many times before. It was, I think, when they saw those familiar actions and heard those familiar words, that they knew Jesus was with them. It was what gave him away. And maybe it is what gives us away as well?

I am reminded of that wonderful story the Princess Bride. I hope you've read it or seen the movie. In the story, there is a poor farm boy named Wesley, who works for the fair and beautiful maiden Buttercup. He wins her love by always replying to her requests, no matter how unreasonable, with the words, "As you wish." Later in the story, Wesley goes off to seek his fortune and is presumed dead at the hands of the Dread Pirate Roberts. Buttercup, who is heartbroken, becomes the princess to the evil King who has her kidnapped so he can start a war with their neighbors. Buttercup is rescued by the Man in Black (who is Wesley in disguise) who scorns her for her lack of faithfulness. In a heated exchange, she pushes him down a very steep ravine saying, "You can die too for all I care." As he is rolling down the hill we hear him say, "As... you... wish..."

In those familiar words, she recognizes that it is Wesley, her true love, and she throws herself down the ravine after him. It is done with wondrous comic effect. And it reminds me of our two disciples this morning as they

hear those familiar words and actions that remind them that Jesus is with them and they, like Buttercup, throw themselves back on the road to tell everyone that their true love is alive and with them.

When they see those familiar ways of being in the world they remember the things Jesus taught them, and isn't it a wonderful image for us as well. They will know we are Christians by our love is how the song goes, and so I am wondering, in what ways are we showing that? What familiar patterns and behaviors in your life reveal the love of God to others? The strangers, the loved ones, the excluded ones? How are we blessing and breaking and sharing the bread for others to enjoy?

I came across this wonderful story on Facebook this week about Greg Smith from Orlando who is the founder of a fitness company, Hybrid Athletes. His smart suits and businessman's attitude tend to act as a magnet for beggars, so he is often approached by people looking for money and food.

One time, however, he encountered a homeless woman who didn't ask him for anything. She just smiled and said, "Good morning, sir, have a great day. God bless!" That wasn't something Greg expected so he stopped to talk to her. The two ended up becoming friends. They meet every Tuesday to have lunch, and the reason they keep doing it is incredible — and incredibly touching.

Here is what Greg shared on his Facebook page: "Meet "Amy Joe". For the last few weeks each Tuesday, Amy Joe and I meet at the corner of Pine street and S. Orange avenue in downtown Orlando (I work downtown and am always moving around the city). Each day for about a week I saw Amy Joe at this corner and she never asked for money...she simply said "Good morning Sir, have a great day. God Bless!!" and smiled."

"I wear a suit to work every day so I get asked a lot for money quite often downtown...but never once from Amy Joe. Every Tuesday Amy Joe and I now have Lunch together. For 30 min to an hour I get to hear how positive she is even though she really has nothing.

Last week Amy Joe kind of dropped a bomb on me...she cannot read. Amy Joe does not smoke, drink, have a drug addiction, or anything to that nature. She simply just has never had anyone teach her how to read. She told me how hard it was for her to find work not being able to read. She began to tell me any money that she can collect she uses to check out library books that help with learning to read instead of buying FOOD.

This crushed me!!! She would rather learn to read to maybe find a job than eat!!! I have been blessed with two amazing parents and a family that has always had resources to provide me with anything I wanted to do. Amy Joe has not. So now not only do Amy Joe and I sit and have lunch, I'm teaching her to read. I rent one library book a week and we read it together Tuesday and she practices on her own throughout the rest of the week.

This post is in not intended to make anyone feel sorry for Amy Joe or brag about me doing something for someone less fortunate. I wanted to share this because maybe this can lead to someone helping another person. There are a lot of people out there like Amy Joe, not all are hungry, homeless, or hurt. Some could be your family or friends. Helping someone could be as easy as saying hello and smiling. I have been fortunate enough in my finances that I can take care of Amy Joe, so that's what I'm going to do."

"If this is something that hit home with you, Like & Share it...if not, that's okay too. But you never know what you can do for someone until you try. Who is your Amy Joe?"

Jesus has risen and is out and about in all the usual places, if we but open our eyes and see. And this for me, is a story that speaks to Jesus being revealed in the breaking of bread. Of an encounter with one of those strangers that come into our lives for a reason. Reasons that we don't always comprehend, but maybe to remind us that he sees us for what and who we are, and invites us to lunch where he might read to us, comfort us, or read us the

riot act. He is revealed by the familiar love and actions he showed us, and by the love he expects us to show others. He walks with us on that Emmaus road each and every day.

A verse from one of my favorite communion hymns reminds me of this love revealed in bread and I'll close with this today. It goes like this, *We gather here in Jesus' name; his love is burning in our hearts like living flame; for through the loving Son the Father makes us one: come, take the bread; come, drink the wine; come, share the Lord. No one is a stranger here; everyone belongs. Finding our forgiveness here, we in turn forgive all wrongs. We gather here in Jesus' name; his love is burning in our hearts like living flame; for through the loving Son the Father makes us one: come, take the bread; come, drink the wine; come, share the Lord.*

Emmaus happens. That should be our mantra to the world. Emmaus happens! God walks with us on all our roads to Emmaus and speaks to all our disappointments and broken hopes and resurrects us to new life. I hope you will take time to remember and share your Emmaus stories with one another. How you have known God's presence in your life and how that has made all the difference. Maybe take some time this week to take someone to lunch or share a soda or a glass of wine and a plate of chili cheese fries. Maybe even share some potato chips and a juice box with God! I hear she has the most wonderful smile, and he may be a lot younger than you imagine! Let us pray.

O God of mystery and wonder we thank you that even though we are blind to your presence you are still there and always have been. Help us to remember to look for you especially when we are having a difficult time and feel all alone and desperate. Let us feel the breath of your love in the wind, the touch of your hand and the gaze of your eyes in the love of others who fill our lives with your love and care. Turn our hopelessness into Joy and let us like those two disciples run back to share the good news that you are alive! Amen