



ST. ANDREW'S IN THE PINES EPISCOPAL CHURCH

SERMON
5-4-14

How could those two guys NOT recognize Jesus? Cleopas and his friend – they have Jesus right there walking with them and they DIDN'T know he was Jesus!? I just don't get it – and the same with Mary Magdalene and the other Mary who meet Jesus at the tomb and think he's the gardener or a ghost. It was Jesus – someone they knew and loved and followed. Yet, their eyes were kept from recognizing him. Weird, huh.

And I love this story of the walk to Emmaus – I really do. I think this is a story about all of us. Can't you see yourself wandering alone or perhaps with someone else and you are wondering where God is? Where is the answer you hoped for? Where is your hope? How patient do you have to be – it's been three days already! Why doesn't life go along as you wished it would? And sometimes in your questioning, sometimes in your sadness and exile you wish you could know – you wish you could know.

But wait! These guys had Jesus right there with them. We can point it out and say- look, look, the answer is right beside you – why can't you recognize Jesus!? He's right there. The only clue I find in the story about why they can't tell it's Jesus is in the sentence – “They stood still, looking sad.” Looking sad. That's the same situation when the Mary's didn't realize it was Jesus standing beside them. They were sad. Grief, sadness, lost expectations, feeling alone, disappointed, angry, forlorn.

I am reading a wonderful book by Barbara Brown Taylor called “Learning to Walk in the Dark.” In it she tells about a blind French resistance fighter named Jacques Lusseyran who published his memoir, “And There Was Light.” By the age of seven Jacques was completely and permanently blind. To many in his world this was a total disaster. Yet his father had the wisdom to say to him, “Always tell us when you discover something.” And he writes that barely ten days after his accident he made a discovery that entranced him for the rest of his life. He wrote: “I had completely lost the sight of my eyes; I could not see the light of the world anymore. Yet the light was still there. Its source was not obliterated. I felt it gushing forth every moment and brimming over; I felt how it wanted to spread out over the world. I had only to receive it. It was unavoidably there. It was all there, and I found again its movements and shades, that it, its colors, which I had loved so passionately a few weeks before. This was something entirely new, you understand, all the more so since it contradicted everything that those who have eyes believe. The source of light is not in the outer world. We believe that it is only because of a common delusion. The light dwells where life also dwells: within ourselves.”

Lusseyran said that since he became blind he paid more attention and one of his greatest discoveries was how the light he saw changed with his inner condition. When he was sad or afraid, the light decreased at once. Sometimes it went out altogether, leaving him deeply and truly blind. When he was joyful and attentive, it returned as strong as ever. And he learned that the best way to see the inner light and remain in its presence was to love. In fact, in January 1944, the Nazis captured Lusseyran and shipped him to Buchenwald concentration camp and he learned even more powerfully how hate worked against him, not only darkening his world but making it smaller as well. He wrote that when he let himself be consumed with anger, he started running into things, slamming into walls, and tripping over furniture. When he called himself back to attention, the space both inside and outside of him opened up so that he found his way and moved with ease again. The most valuable thing he learned was that no one could turn out the light inside him without his consent.

Wow. Grief, sadness, anger, lost expectations, hate, disappointments – the world closes in – darkness descends. Jesus is not recognized.

And what breaks that darkness? In the story of the journey to Emmaus, the two men begin to see when Jesus breaks bread and offers it to them. He breaks bread – here is my body, offered for you, do this and remember me. Here is my body offered for you. When Jesus shares himself – not just with words, information, condolences, teaching.....when Jesus share HIMSELF – they recognize him. Then their eyes were opened. Then there eyes were opened.

In the Stephen Ministry training we have a lesson on people in crisis. We were shown a chart with the experiences that nearly all people have when there is a crisis in their life. At some point there is a fork in the road. One direction has avoidance and isolation and attempting to handle things alone. The other side has acknowledgment of the difficulties and turning to others for assistance. Turning to others – I will let myself be known by others and I will let others share themselves with me and I will share myself with them. To know and be known.

Be known in the breaking of the bread – in our brokenness which we share with others we are known. And then we see. And then we recognize Jesus. And then the light within shines forth showing us the way.

I love the story of the road to Emmaus – it is our ongoing journey into salvation, our ongoing journey responding to the divine. To see and be seen. To know and be known.

Thanks be to God.