



Every Step of the Way

Encounter on the Emmaus road

On that same day, two disciples were traveling to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking to each other about everything that had happened. While they were discussing these things, Jesus himself arrived and joined them on their journey. They were prevented from recognizing him.

He said to them, "What are you talking about as you walk along?" They stopped, their faces downcast. The one named Cleopas replied, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who is unaware of the things that have taken place there over the last few days?"

He said to them, "What things?" They said to him, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth. Because of his powerful deeds and words, he was recognized by God and all the people as a prophet. But our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him. We had hoped he was the one who would redeem Israel. All these things happened three days ago. But there's more: Some women from our group have left us stunned. They went to the tomb early this morning and didn't find his body. They came to us saying that they had even seen a vision of angels who told them he is alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women said. They didn't see him."

Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! Your dull minds keep you from believing all that the prophets talked about. Wasn't it necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then he interpreted for them the things written about himself in all the scriptures, starting with Moses and going through all the Prophets.

When they came to Emmaus, he acted as if he was going on ahead. But they urged him, saying, "Stay with us. It's nearly evening, and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. After he took his seat at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight. They said to each other, "Weren't our hearts on fire when he spoke to us along the road and when he explained the scriptures for us?"

In Luke, we read the story of two men walking home to Emmaus after the crucifixion of Jesus when they are joined by the risen Christ. The men are grieving and anxious to talk about what has happened. They do not recognize Jesus, but they are drawn to him as he talks to them about what happened in Jerusalem and how it related to the Old Testament scriptures. Jesus walks with the men every step of the way and they invite him to come and join them for dinner. In the community of breaking bread, they finally recognize Jesus.

Only by looking back do they realize that Jesus has been with them the whole time. Jesus had been with them even when they did not realize it. Jesus had been with them even when they did not recognize him. The message is clear - there has never been a time on our journey when God has not been on the road with us.

This is important for us to remember. I (Pastor Jeff) grew up in the church. I was baptized as a baby. I never had a "moment" when God suddenly appeared in my story. It is only in looking back over my life that I realized that I have had all kinds of "God moments." Sometimes I was aware of God's presence, but, like our friends in Luke's story, I often did not recognize God walking with me.

This scripture calls us to look back at our own journey, to recall those moments in life where the road ahead was taking a big turn, sometimes in grief, sometimes in fear, sometimes in joy. Were we able to recognize Jesus walking with us? Was there a point where we looked back to realize Christ was with us all along?

Our experience matters. That is one of the things we United Methodists have always honored as a way of knowing God. Along with scripture, tradition, and reason, our experiences throughout life's journey give us a window into how and where God has been at work in our lives. The powerful thing is that your experience and my experience will not always be the same. There may be moments of similarity, but also moments of difference. These differences in experience are not to be explained away. When we share our different experiences we get a bigger, fuller, more complete picture of how God has been at work in the world. When is the last time you looked back over your life to name and claim the experiences that have made and shaped you?

We have been looking at our gifts and how we were uniquely created. While that is important, there is nothing more important than our story, our walk on this earth. Our experiences and our journey make us who we are and recognizing God's hand in the journey strengthens our relationship with God. Just like the two men on the road to Emmaus, we look back at our path and see that God was with us every step of the way.

Every Step of the Way

Think back over your life. Name 8-10 significant moments when your story changes or turns. These moments can both be highs and lows.

Moment #1

Title: _____

Brief Description: _____

Moment #2

Title: _____

Brief Description: _____

Moment #3

Title: _____

Brief Description: _____

Moment #4

Title: _____

Brief Description: _____

Moment #5

Title: _____

Brief Description: _____

Moment #6

Title: _____

Brief Description: _____

Moment #7

Title: _____

Brief Description: _____

Moment #8

Title: _____

Brief Description: _____

Moment #9

Title: _____

Brief Description: _____

Moment #10

Title: _____

Brief Description: _____

My Walk to Emmaus

Plot the Journey

Reflecting on the Journey

What has been some of the themes of this journey?

What has been the surprises?

What has God brought to you in the midst of this journey?

Now look at the journey you have plotted. See where God has brought you. Listen for a word or phrase that best names this journey. Write down what comes to you:

This is your current life theme.
