

April 26 & 27, 2025

The Road

Luke 24:13-35

Pastor Sarah Fike

Christ is Risen

He is risen indeed.

This weekend is a special weekend in the life of our church and in our family ministry program. We are confirming a group of Confirmands at our 10:30 service. This is a wonderful group of youth in our congregation. I have been teaching confirmation for a long time and I can honestly say this group has been the most curious and engaged group confirmation students I have ever had.

I remember going through confirmation. Well, I don't remember too much other than watching the movie the 10 Commandments which is a very long movie, having to do 25 worship notes each year of confirmation, and writing a faith statement that if I remember correctly, we had to share in front of the congregation. Now, I tried to find my faith statement from when I got confirmed but didn't have any luck. I wanted to share with you what I wrote when I was in 9th grade just being confirmed compared to where I am now. Because my faith has changed a lot since then. I am still learning new things and my faith is still changing. I'm sure you all could say the same.

But confirmation isn't just for the confirmand, it is also for us. Because we made promises to the kids in our congregation to support them in their faith life, to guide them in their questioning, to give them opportunities to learn more about how deep God's love is for them. So this weekend is also for us to remember those promises we made to them. Because we know so well that their journey is only just beginning and that a community of believers is important especially when we feel like we are walking through this life alone. It is especially important when we feel like Christ isn't there. The community of believers are there to show us Christ's presence on our faith journey.

Two people were walking to Emmaus from Jerusalem. Undoubtedly with the disappointment and sadness lingering over their heads after witnessing what had just taken place. This is the same day that the women find the tomb empty which back then people didn't have cell phones or really any phones, so it's not like Jesus could call or text someone letting them know that he was back from dead.

Along their journey of hopelessness and disappointment, a man comes and joins them on their trek back home. Luke tells us that this man is Jesus, but for some odd reason these travelers are kept from recognizing him. Now, this should not be the case, they knew who Jesus was and knew what Jesus looked like.

I think this unrecognizable face of Jesus is different than when you see a person and you recognize their face, but can't, for the life of you, remember the person's name. Have you all ever experienced that? They legitimately do not recognize or know who this person is that joined them on their journey, because they are kept from really seeing the face of Jesus.

Throughout the journey, Jesus gives clues as to who he was, but still nothing; there was no aha moment of finally figuring it out who Jesus was. Instead, they tell Jesus all about the Messiah and how disappointed they were because, they had heard that when the women went to the tomb, Jesus was not there. It was empty! They go on to tell that the women had seen a vision of angels saying that Jesus was alive. So why are these men so disappointed on the road to Emmaus?

Well because the person they thought was the Messiah was to come to redeem Israel, but the Messiah was nowhere to be found even if the tomb was empty.

Disappointing.

When I was in seminary, I travelled to Israel and Palestine. I had the same feeling of disappointment. Now, I wasn't in Jerusalem to witness to the death of Jesus and was waiting to

see him resurrected, but I did still expect to witness Jesus' presence while I was there.

There were 32 of us in the group I was with traveling around the Holy Land visiting all the holy sites significant in the biblical stories we are most familiar with.

I think most of us were hoping to visit the Holy Land and have these incredible spiritual moments, feeling the presence of Jesus in ways like we had never before. Where we would be consumed by the sacred, held in the holiest of holies bringing back those goose bumps, emotional stories to our friends and families. We were hoping to be forever changed by encountering Jesus.

We had a full itinerary. We woke up, ate breakfast, and then got on the bus to go to our first location. Once we arrived, we would get off the bus, look around along with many other tour groups, read the biblical story associated with the location we were at and learned some more background information, and then got back on the bus and drove to our next location.

This routine repeated throughout the day and the days to come. Because of all the moving around, crowded spaces, and limited time at each location in the Holy Land, it started to become apparent that searching for Jesus' presence was going to be harder than we thought. The hoped for holy moments of encountering Jesus were far and few between.

Our hopelessness and disappointment started to set in.

We wondered if we were ever going to find Jesus in this holy land? We traveled all this way to this place where Jesus once walked and we thought for sure we would encounter him.

Just like the two travelers on the road to Emmaus. Jesus continued the journey back home with them, and as the end of the day drew near, the disappointed travelers invited Jesus to stay with them.

That evening as they gathered around a table, Jesus took bread, blessed it, and broke it and gave it to the disappointed travelers. And in that moment the unrecognizable face of Jesus was revealed to them. The risen Christ made known right before their eyes. Not only was that the moment they had encountered the Risen Christ, but they also realized that the identity of this mystery man was calling them to see him through their hearts burning all along the way from Jerusalem.

And once they realized Jesus, the Risen one, was accompanying them on the Road to Emmaus, the once disappointed travelers, got up and immediately started to hike back the seven miles to Jerusalem. They go, even though it was evening, when the darkness filled the sky. They go, even though it was at night when it was not a safe time to travel.

They go because burning hearts demand to be shared. That once you share a table, share communion with Christ, you are always moved to share the good news with others.

And now, I bet you are wondering how my trip to the holy land worked out....Well, it wasn't until our group slowed down and took bread, blessed it, and broke it, sharing in this meal hearing the words given for you that we realized our hearts had been burning the whole time.

Even in a place that seemed to be filled with hopelessness, a Palestinian refugee camp, Jesus was walking with us. Our hearts were burning when we witnessed to our brothers and sisters in Christ's stories and experiences, through the happiness of children playing outside. In a place, where we would not expect to encounter Jesus, Christ showed up. And so we took our stories back to our friends and families and told them about our burning hearts.

As Christians, followers of Christ, who will likely never meet Jesus in the flesh, Luke invites us, to gather with each other around Word and Sacrament so that we might be met on the way, in our journey, to hear God's word opened, perceive

Christ in our midst, and to be sent to share the good news of the resurrection.

But know that even when you are not gathered at the baptismal font or the table where Christ's presence is most easily recognized, we are never alone. Our heart's will always be burning in the places we least expect it and the place where we most expect it.

We may not always recognize it until we gather once again at the font or table, where we can lay down our burdens, hopelessness, and disappointments of our daily journeys, where we feel water being poured, where Jesus breaks bread, blesses it, and gives it to each and everyone of us, so that we are filled to go and share that good news with others, to share the good news that has set our hearts on fire with love. The tomb is empty, let us walk with Jesus.

Amen.