April 26th , 2019

Springfield Presbyterian Church

Third sunday of Easter

**The Road to Emmaus**

1. The Men on the Road

 What we don’t have here this morning is two jolly men walking this long road to Emmaus. They were talking about all that had happened, trying to process the trauma that they felt in seeing their Savior die. They are not grieving Jesus’ death alone, but rather, they are grieving something more complex. They are grieving their hopes for liberation, grieving the corruption of government, grieving the story that they’ve lived – where they’ve seen miracles happen and joyous experiences and they grieve now – what does that mean, does it matter? The two men may be carrying some of their belongings on their back, but their heart is carrying so much more.

 And then there’s Jesus, completely incognito, comes up to these men as they stroll along and he starts to have a conversation with them and he’s wondering why they are so sad. While the men are showing hospitality for this man who has joined them on the road, you can hear their disbelief – are you the only person who doesn’t know about what just happened? And the men explain what has happened until they reach their destination. The men look at the man they don’t know as Jesus and again show hospitality – saying, the day is done, why don’t you come and stay, have dinner, and lay your head down for some rest.

 What is beautiful in this moment of hospitality is that despite these men being sad and feeling like they’ve lost it all, they still let this new guy enter in. They still, thinking that Jesus is dead, live out the values that Jesus has taught them. Even in their grief, the disciples are still embodying the way of Jesus as they live and breath.

 They also remind us that there is an important invitation that has been made. Jesus did not invite himself in for dinner, Jesus could have continued down the road. Yet, these men make the invitation clear – which calls us to invite Jesus into our house, as we study Scripture, as we pray a prayer of blessing over food, as we discern as families in important decision making. We have the call to ask Jesus to enter in, we are the ones who need to offer the invitation, and so the question is – alike these two tired men on the road, are you willing to invite Jesus in?

II. Dinner

 Dinner time comes and Jesus shares the Eucharist by breaking bread and blessing it and then all the sudden – unexplainably, a moment of epiphany happens. The men recognize that this man is Jesus but as soon as this happens, Jesus vanishes from their sight. It is so jarring, so moving, that even though their legs are tired and weak, they go the same hour and walk the seven miles back to Jerusalem to proclaim to the others that Jesus indeed has been risen from the dead and they knew Him as he was breaking the bread.

1. Come to the Table

We are not celebrating the Lord’s Supper this morning, but we

acknowledge the power of that experience here today. We are reminded that all of us find Jesus in different ways – some find Jesus in prayer, some in song, some in silent meditation, and some find their Savior as they come to the table. I have been asking since Christmas, and I continue to ask you all – why is communion important to you?

 There is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answer here – only your truth. At Springfield, we celebrate communion usually the first Sunday of the month and on special holy days such as Christmas and Easter. The Presbyterian Church does not give us a schedule for communion, they just say that we should celebrate the feast ‘regularly.’ For most churches, they share our pattern, other churches celebrate communion every week, and some perhaps four times a year. This does not make a church ‘good’ or ‘bad’ – it’s just the common practice.

What we do see here in our Scripture today is that this sacrament is the way in which Jesus revealed himself to his disciples. And it is important for them because they recall meeting together at the Last Supper before Jesus’ crucifixion. It is this memory, this connection to a different Passover, to a communal practice that reveals Jesus to these men. It wasn’t in walking or talking with men that Jesus was revealed, it was in the sacred sacrament.

 But the question keeps poking me on the shoulder – why is communion important to me, to you, to us? What is it about this sacrament that is powerful and how do we make sure that it isn’t rote or routine. How do we capture that moment that those men had? My question remains in the air, yours to meditate on, to question, to challenge.

1. Returning to Pilgrimmage

So we let that knowledge and those questions rest on our

hearts and minds this week. I’ve asked you two questions thus far – are you willing to invite Jesus in and what does communion mean to you? I have one more question though, are you willing, like these men, to live the life of a pilgrim on the journey of faith?

 Perhaps that’s a bit obscure, so let me refine this idea. When I was living on Iona, the folks who came to visit would often call themselves ‘pilgrims’ – people who have journeyed to a sacred space to come and learn more about their Savior. In fact, this idea of pilgrimage became so common in the community that I recall one day as I was walking with a friend, seeing a stranger on a bench, her eyes closed and a smile on her face – here and not here. I looked at my friend with a confused look, and my friend’s simple response was: “She’s busy pilgrimaging” and we continued to walk along, finding this normal.

 When I ask whether you are willing to be a pilgrim though, in this context, I’m not asking you to cross the Atlantic but rather to live into the mindset of God-with-us. God comes alongside us as we journey in this life, and so would you be willing to be curious, imaginative, suspicious, questioning – what God is doing in your life as you walk on your own faith journey? The call here is to be present, to be wanting and wondering, to be asking the important questions as you live a life of faith.

1. Mistaken Blessings

As you sit with the questions I’ve given you, perhaps now

is a time in your life to begin to think about them deeply. This time where we have had to be apart has been a grief in so many ways and undeniably people have been hurt and shattered, jobs endangered if not cut, that we can’t see a blessing a mile away. But maybe you make your own blessings sometimes – maybe you choose this time as a blessing to sit and reflect, to ask the questions here and more questions that you wouldn’t have asked in your ‘normal’ day-to-day life. Maybe the blessing here is that there is an opportunity, an opportunity to let Christ come alongside us, to nurture and nourish us, and to hold us as we journey towards a renewed and deeper faith. Amen.