

Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19
Luke 24:13-35

“Walking Home”

“Let’s walk home.” We seldom say that anymore.

We live too far away. We live too far apart.

And where we shop, and go for entertainment ...
the movies and plays and ball games ... all are at
a distance, so we quickly hop into the car and
drive.

So we seldom say ... “Let’s walk home.”

And besides, walking home is dangerous ...

Walking along the side of the road ...you just might get
hit by a speeding car.

Or be assaulted and robbed.

But grand things/positive/earthshaking things can happen
while walking home.

Like, you can hold hands ... and look at the moon and stars ...
and catch a kiss– and laugh – and cry.

Like, you can talk – and wonder – and revisit the day just past
... and hopes for the future.

Like, when you are walking home – you might fall on your face
... or fall to your knees.

Walking home you may come to a cross road ... and stop and
ponder which way? Or where am I now? Or where am I
heading. Where is God leading?

While walking home ... you can be met by a friend –
or by a stranger ... uh oh, you better be careful of
strangers.

Walking home ... you can be confused. Drained of courage.
Disheartened. And you have time, while walking home, to

figure things out. Certainly if you're walking with a friend, that friend can extend lots of help.

Especially if you are met by a friend. That friend can make all the difference in the world!

Cleopas and his friend were returning home from an exhausting extended weekend in Jerusalem. They were on their way to Emmaus. It was a seven mile trek so they were on the road for several hours ... that gave them ample time to process what they had seen and heard ... and experienced back in Jerusalem.

I use the word "process." I don't think that word/that concept "process" appears in Aramaic – or Hebrew – or Greek.

How make sense of the senseless?

How make sense of a truly good man being condemned to death and nailed to a cross of wood?

How make sense that a man who loved and healed, who forgave those who opposed him could generate such hostility?

How make sense that the people with power – and almost everyone turned on Jesus and demanded crucifixion?

Cleopas and his friend were there ...

And were there possibly/probably when they laid him in the tomb ...

How do you process that ... make sense of it ... and not turn angry and bitter...perhaps even plot ways to exact revenge.

Perhaps as they walked home they thought about ... talked about revenge. Certainly their hatred of the occupying Romans intensified. And resentment towards their religious leaders who connived and made nice with the Roman authorities deepened.

And for Cleopas and his friend ... their messianic dreams of restoration and freedom from Roman domination seemed shattered.

And now on their way home a stranger catches-up with them. They had been in no hurry, for after all, they had nothing to get home for.

"What are you talking about?" The stranger asks.

"What, are you the only one who doesn't know what has been happening around here?"

"What has been happening?"

And they blurt-out the whole story the best they can:

Jesus of Nazareth was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and our chief priests and leaders handed him over to the Roman authorities to be condemned to death and crucified.

But 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. And then some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and 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. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had reported; but they did not see Jesus."

Then this stranger said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about the messiah in all the scriptures.

As they approached Emmaus, the stranger walked ahead as if he were going on. But 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.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

They 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?"

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then Cleopas told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

THIS IS THE WORD OF THE LORD. Thanks be to God.

IT IS GOOD. YES, IT IS VERY GOOD TO BE WALKING HOME. WALKING HOME WITH A FRIEND ...

And to be met by a stranger ... to talk with a stranger ...
and to learn a thing or two.

And it's not necessarily to learn a thing or two, but to be **reminded** of a thing or two.

To be reminded of who we are and that our destiny is wrapped into the history of God working through God's people.

And God is patient, and eternally merciful. And that God is on the side ... especially of the distressed and afflicted ... those who bear scars from many wounds ... those worn-out and aggrieved. Who grieve like those who have little hope.

And this stranger walking alongside reminds ... "That's what your watch for Messiah is all about. Not for a conquering war hero, but for a deeply caring, loving, servant ... a suffering servant. Who knows you. And you long for and recognize and worship him.

But now it's getting on towards evening ... Cleopas and his friend don't know this gentleman – but they do know the rule/the tradition of HOSPITALITY. **You** of Head of Christiana Presbyterian Church know it too. Deep in your heart, you know it.

The stranger had already walked on ahead a little as if he were going to continue on his journey ... but Cleopas and his friend invite ... "STAY WITH US." And he goes in ... and stays with them.

And they prepare something to eat and then sit together around the table ... and the stranger takes the bread ... and blesses it ...and breaks it ... and gives it to them ... and their eyes are opened ... they recognize ... **JESUS**.

And Jesus vanishes.

And that leaves them babbling ... did not our hearts burn within us while we were walking and listening back there on the road ...as he opened the scriptures to us ... and everything dawned so clear.

And in less than an hour they are back on the road ... walking those seven miles back to Jerusalem – back to their faithful friends. And they find the eleven along with their companions ... all gathered together and exclaiming ... “The Lord has risen indeed ... he has appeared to Simon!”

And Cleopas and his friend tell their story ... what had happened on the road as they were going home to Emmaus and how Jesus made himself known to them in the breaking of bread.

The Lord has risen. That reality was settling in their bones ... in their hearts and minds.

And look! Jesus appeared again and stood among them. “Peace be with you.” They were startled and terrified ... they thought they were seeing a ghost. ”Don’t be afraid. “Don’t doubt. “Look, I have flesh and bones. “Ghosts don’t have flesh and bones. “Look ... it is I myself. “Look at my hands and feet.”

They were joyous ... disbelieving ... wondering ... all that wrapped-up into one.

“Do you have anything here to eat,” he asks. They give him a piece of broiled fish, and he takes it and eats it.

And he says, “Look, you have heard it all ... “You have seen it all.” Life coming from death. That is God’s way.

So affirm that. Preach that. Demonstrate that.
Life coming from death...that’s God’s way!

Proclaim that good news starting here in Jerusalem, throughout all Judea, and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Go ... be my witnesses. **Do that, and you will receive God's power.**

This sermon began ... **“Walking Home.”**

It began with Cleopas and his friend walking home to Emmaus ... eyes filled with tears, hope in tatters, heartsick. And on the way home they are met by a stranger and they form something of a bond ... stay with us, they invited. Gracious hospitality in that home. Something to eat and drink ... and the stranger takes the bread and breaks it and gives it to them. **JESUS!** They recognize him.

Within an hour they are trekking the seven miles back to Jerusalem – to find the 11 and their other companions ... so the journey **HOME** continues back to Jerusalem and a joyous celebration ... the 11 and their companions are saying (Actually, I believe they are singing, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon.”)

And Jesus stands in their midst, “Peace be with you,” I’m no ghost. I’m alive. Touch me. And they’re joyful, and disbelieving ... and wondering.

What do you have to eat? And he eats. Fish for the journey.
I believe all ate for eating is a crucial part of being HOME. (a grand sign of being HOME)

But that must have been a big meal ... food for a lifetime. Proclaim the good news starting here in Jerusalem, Proclaim it throughout all Judea, and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Go ... be my witnesses. God will give you the POWER.

So now HOME becomes not only Emmaus ... and JERUSALEM ... JUDEA AND SAMARIA ...

THOSE ARE KIND OF FAMILIAR PLACES ...
BUT ALSO DAMASCUS ... ANTOCH ... and towns and villages of GREECE ... MACEDONIA ... AND ON TO ROME.

All become HOME, for men and women and children are meeting strangers there ...and

recognize among them in the breaking of bread their RISEN LORD. And the spirit of God pushes them on.

And they are no longer just WALKING but they embark on caravans and ships ... Boats plying the Mediterranean ... caravans overland to India ... discovering HOME ...met by their living LORD ... Breaking bread...reading the Word...Telling the Word...Showing the Word of gracious, hospitable love. Swept-along by power not their own ... they call it Holy Spirit.

To make a long story short ... some push-off on boats up the Delaware and a tributary we now call Christina and find HOME here in this cove. For the risen Lord meets them here, and they break bread and read and share the Word ... good news that can't be kept to themselves. And they establish a church and fresh winds of Holy Spirit continue to blow among hospitable people.

AND WHERE WILL IT ALL END?

WELL, WILL WE ALLOW FRESH WINDS OF HOLY SPIRIT TO WAFT THROUGH US ... WAFT THROUGH OUR CONGREGATION...THROUGH OUR LIVES?

THAT HAPPENS AS WE ARE FAITHFUL. COURAGEOUS. GENEROUSLY HOSPITABLE. ALLOWING OURSELVES TO BE MET HERE BY OUR RISEN LORD ... AND BREAKING BREAD ... AND READING AND SHARING THE WORD ... GOOD NEWS THAT MUST BE HEARD AND LIVED ...AND SHARED.

THE TEMPTATION IS TO SETTLE-DOWN IN EMMAUS. MAKE THAT/MAKE THIS HOME FOREVER.

Or to settle down in Jerusalem – or Greece – or Rome ...or wherever ... the road is difficult ... AND WE ARE TIRED-OUT ... AND PERHAPS WE'RE AFRAID WE WILL LOSE WHAT WE HAVE. That's a big fear. ... But get this ... these people ... before being called Christians ... were called PEOPLE OF THE WAY. That's who we are ... and the way stretches out before us.

Let us follow.

