

"Walking and Talking"**Luke 24:13-35**

Years ago I came across some devotional books written by a person who obviously experienced life much like the rest of us. The first book I bought was titled, Where 2 or 3 are Gathered Together, SOMEONE SPILLS HIS MILK. Isn't that the truth, especially if there are young children at the table? Two or Three gathered together also creates another activity, and that generally is talking. There may be some discussion about whether the 2 can be spouses. Sometimes spouses don't always have something to talk about, or maybe one talks and the other listens, or both talk with neither listening, or neither listen nor care. The latter is the extreme. As I met with a couple the other night preparing for marriage, he mentioned a couple he knew who for 10 years simply walked past the other without ever saying a word to each other. But, I would guess, when the two of them are with friends I bet they talk a lot about each other! So often when I see a couple or three people together walking along, I wonder what they are talking about. Two friends out shopping in the mall are talking as fast as they are walking. Young kids walking together anywhere are always talking about something. Sitting in a surgical waiting room, people are talking together. A young couple enjoying a meal together is happily discussing their lives. Two people walking or jogging in exercise seem to be conversing the whole time. What is it that all these people are talking about? Wouldn't you at times like to eavesdrop on conversations people are having? Two people are on their way home from Jerusalem are having a very heartfelt discussion as they approach Emmaus. Suddenly a third party joins their journey. Jesus is unrecognized but apparently welcomed to walk along. Then he asks the question so many of us ask when we join in the walk. "What are you talking about?" He could have very well asked also, "Who are you talking about?" Their answers are very much the same as ours. We talk about the things that sadden us. We had hopes the Sabres would have won. We hoped things would have turned out differently. Our disappointments are heavy upon us. We heard things that

*Seem unbelievable. What do you talk about when you walk about?
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In the Emmaus House we have a copy of the familiar painting of the Walk to Emmaus. It shows Jesus joining the two disciples along the dusty road as they trekked along looking rather distressed. These were not any of the 12 disciples, but were still followers who had pinned many hopes upon Jesus. Interestingly, we probably have always considered the two to be men, but some prominent scholars have said they were a man and woman. Only Cleopas is named, and who is say that the other wasn't his wife. Jesus joins them, and asks the leading questions. His response wasn't meant to be a putdown because they did not understand the Scriptures. Maybe Jesus was simply reminding them that God had all along intended for his salvation to become evident in his Son. There is comfort for us in this story as we all, too, talk about the same things that these two people were discussing. Even when we may not recognize him, or think God cares or listens, we are surprised in knowing and being reminded that Jesus does indeed walk with us. He is with us when we discuss our disappointments and pains, our fears and hurts, our joys and celebrations, and our hopes and dreams. When we walk (or drive) alone, we are not alone. In the midst of our walks and talks, alone or with 2 or 3, or in a crowd of 30 or 130, Jesus is there.

Jesus reveals the plan of God through the prophets and writings of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament. It must have been very helpful since the two of them invited him, at the moment a stranger, to stay with them. God's Word can do that to us. Reading what God has done throughout history gives comfort and hope for us today. God has always been a God wanting us to have salvation and forgiveness. God has been a loving God, slow to anger and compassionate. In Jesus God takes on our flesh, walks in life with us, and comes to us in the worship and fellowship of all his disciples. Each week we come to hear the comfort of the Word, to join in the walk of life with one another, to confess our failures and disappointments, our sin, and to come to the table to receive the very body and blood of him who died and rose again for all of us. In the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we commune with him who saves us and with one another who hunger and thirst for righteousness. In this place and time, and in this assembly, we come to know and receive the Risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

What do you talk about as you sit or walk with another? Yes, too often we break the 8th Commandment because we love to talk about others. We gossip and tell untruths or exaggerations about people, but I think underneath the outward gossip is often disappointment in another. Our hopes were smashed in that person. We looked up to someone and the person let us down. We also often talk about the ups and downs of life, our spouses and marriages good and bad, our children infant and grown, our health and wealth. There is no shortage of material for conversation with another trusted friend. These Emmaus bound disciples probably thought God let them down like so often we do. Our hopes in faith and religion and God disappoint us, and we scatter like these first disciples were doing. We sometimes walk away from God because a person failed or upset us. We want help from God and his people and sometimes we don't get it the way we wish. These 2 people left Jerusalem with heavy hearts because they were disappointed in God. How many people have left the church because they, too, felt God disappointed them. We want a Messiah who gets the enemy and is not overcome by the enemy. We want a Messiah that won't die, but reign victoriously over all the enemies. We want a Messiah to favor us and grant us our wishes. We want a King to give it to us our way. People may have many reasons for leaving the church, but I wonder if underneath all the reasons isn't somehow a feeling of disappointment in God. People may not need God, may be busy, may be tending to so much else, but underneath something happened about a relationship with God that became a disappointment or failure for them.

In Matthew's Gospel account, Jesus says, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." Martin Luther wrote that one way the Gospel is proclaimed is through the *mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren*. Here we are in a worship setting, more of a formal stage than a conversation among others enjoying some fellowship and refreshment after a worship service. At both places, however, the same thing can be happening. We are blessed in the presence of our Lord. Jesus is with us around a dinner or coffee table, and around this altar and table in this holy house. In what we enjoy as friends in Christ is our salvation from sin, death and devil. Jesus is with us in our daily walks and in

this weekly talk. He brings to us words of comfort and hope through his holy Word, through his servants and ministers, and through his holy sacraments. Jesus saved us and claimed us through our baptisms, and in this holy meal again makes himself present for us to behold. We believe with boldness that Christ is truly present in the bread and wine, and in this act of worship. He is here among us promising again he is with us when we leave.

When we leave we leave with hope renewed. Cleopas and friend had burning hearts from Jesus being recognized among them, and it is our desire that our hearts would be uplifted and strengthened when we are together in his presence of worship and prayer. The two were quick to tell the story of what they experienced, even to the point of heading straight back to Jerusalem to share the good news with their friends and companions. Leaving worship is not simply leaving with only our needs met, but leaving with strength to help others in their needs and hopes. We hold firmly to the hope of eternal life given us in the risen Lord, and in that faith, we are granted the abilities to bring hope to those who are saddened, failed and disappointed. Hope in the risen Lord increases our joys as well, and we rejoice even more in the Lord. When we leave here, we leave recounting the words of Simeon as he first witnessed the infant in the temple, "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." May we go in peace and hope knowing in this hour we have seen our salvation in Jesus who walks and talks with us, and breaks bread with us. And even if someone among us spills the milk, it doesn't matter. Christ is risen. **He is risen indeed. Alleluia.**