

## A Sermon for DaySpring

By Tiffani Harris

*The Eucharistic Life*

Luke 24:13-35

4.26.2020

We join these two Christ followers walking down the road. It is as if we are there, and we wonder why they cannot see that the one walking with them is the Christ. Maybe they are blinded by shame and fear or distracted by their anger at the leaders. Whatever the reason, Christ does not look like they thought he would. Discussing the situation doesn't increase their understanding either. But Jesus patiently walks with them, engages them and hears their pain. Upon reaching their destination, they ask Christ to linger – to stay with them just a bit longer. In the midst of their confusion, these disciples do what their Lord had taught them to do – they share hospitality with a stranger and eat together. In a holy reversal, at the table, Jesus, the guest, leads them in prayer by taking, blessing and breaking the bread with his nail-scarred hands. It is in this moment, that the blindness of the travelers is healed.

Now seeing fully – seeing what they could not see, what had been there all along - these two disciples recall how Christ fed the 5,000 just as we remember the last meal Christ had with his disciples, two chapters earlier. How many times had they eaten and broken bread together? Breaking bread together was an ordinary act, and their invitation for Christ to stay was a humble and ordinary invitation. In this very normal gesture, what was hidden had come to light.

Table fellowship is a common theme in Luke's Gospel where Jesus is scolded for eating with sinners. And when he feeds thousands, he casts a vision for what fellowship in the Kingdom of God looks like. In the last meal, Christ instructs his disciples to eat with each other in remembrance. The first time Peter recognizes Jesus as the Messiah is after Christ takes, blesses, and breaks the bread in the feeding of the 5,000. At the table in Emmaus, Christ's true identity is revealed again in the breaking of bread.

The word Eucharist means "with thanksgiving". In his last supper with the disciples, Christ invites his followers to eat and to live *Eucharistically* – to live as He lived: a life that is broken, poured out and offered up. This is the vision for the community of God.

So much happens on this journey at Emmaus. There is grief, anger, and confusion, and Christ patiently companions these travelers. And in so doing, they are transformed. The ordinary becomes sacred. You and I have the vantage point of knowing that this is Christ walking with them on the road. Naturally, it leads us to wonder how we may be like these disciples. We ask ourselves: when have we been unaware of Christ's faithful presence with us?

If I were to ask you, how you normally encounter Jesus, how you most often see God at work in your life, I might hear answers such as . . . outside in nature or through a friendship,

in Christian community or in worship, in a small group or Bible study, in prayer with others journeying together, and when we celebrate Communion. In the past 6 weeks of quarantine, some of our “go-to’s” for connecting with God are gone for now, and we are adjusting. Recognizing the Divine among us is not an easy task, as the disciples so aptly demonstrated.

Right before this pandemic hit, we at DaySpring had begun observing Communion regularly for Lent. We hardly had time to explore what it is that regular Communion could teach us, and then, we had to put it on hold. When we come forward for Communion, in this beautiful sanctuary, we come to the table with open and cupped hands, seeking Christ’s transformation as we receive the elements. In the breaking and blessing of the bread, Christ healed the disciples’ blindness – this is the same healing that we also seek. What might it be like for us, each time we receive the bread, to ask Christ to stay with us, bringing healing?

Although we cannot celebrate Eucharist together today like we have in the past, we can see our ordinary meals as an opportunity - for Eucharist, for gratitude. Each week, you receive an email from the church with prayers and Scripture for the week, meant to be prayed during a meal. With this, we eat our meals sacramentally as a church community, together with each other in spirit. Like the Emmaus table, we come to our own tables just as we are and invite Christ to linger – to stay with us transforming our ordinary into the sacred.

Who would have thought that the Holy Spirit could move and reveal Christ among us on Zoom . . . but it happened. I treasured seeing so many of you on our Maundy Thursday call, as each of you ate in your different homes, and we shared in the same prayers and Scripture together. Although miles separate us, we have discovered a new form of solidarity and community amongst ourselves in our mealtime liturgies –praying with each other in our own places. So much of the way we encounter Christ is through the body of Christ – through God’s people in community. We are finding new ways to be community to each other.

The Eucharistic life is one in which we come as we are like the Emmaus disciples, pain and anger laid bare, to receive from Christ. We in turn offer up our own lives to God in thanksgiving, and we are sent out in to the world to live this out. Henri Nouwen in his meditation on Emmaus and the Eucharist, writes that “Living Eucharistically, is living life as a gift.”

What is the invitation for you in this post-resurrection passage? Is it to eat sacramentally and find God in the ordinary? Is it to extend hospitality to someone else? Is it to ask Christ to stay and linger and pour out your heart to our self-giving God? How might we see afresh what is right in front of us?

During this pandemic, I have wondered what the monastic hermits and the Desert Mothers and Fathers might have to teach us about solitude. They chose their isolation, something that may seem puzzling to us during this quarantine. The Desert Mothers or “Ammas” of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries were spiritual elders to Christians on pilgrimages, seeking deeper connection with God. They were the very first hermits. They lived solitary lives in the

desert, spending their time fasting and praying -- seeking a deeper understanding of life with God. They taught young pilgrims to not fear the isolation and dreariness of the desert, for the desert is precisely where the inner journey is enlivened and awakened. They call this the "*gift of the desert*".

In this strange new journey of life in pandemic, it may feel like a desert to some or a lonely and confusing road to others. Christ was with the disciples on their journey and Christ is with us. Let us ask Jesus to linger so that we may actually see what we have not seen. In the Emmaus story and in our very own lives, the ordinary and mundane tasks are exactly the place where Christ's identity is revealed and where his transforming presence is made known.

Maybe one day we will be able to call this season "*the gift of quarantine*."

Copyright by Tiffani Harris, 2020