
A Reflection For Today

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The Walk to Emmaus

(Texts: [Luke 24:13-35](#))

On the day the women found the tomb empty, Cleopas and another unnamed disciple set out for Emmaus, a village seven miles from Jerusalem. They had heard the women's incredible story about a vision of angels declaring Jesus alive. We're not told why these two unknown disciples were journeying to Emmaus, but Jesus chooses them to reveal himself and converse with.



I firmly believe that Jesus reveals himself to those with open hearts. However, some well-intentioned Christians have taken this event and turned it into a measure of worthiness through an exclusive retreat called The Road to Emmaus. One needs an invitation to participate, and the retreat seems secretive, as attendees can only discuss certain aspects with others who have participated. This exclusivity can leave some feeling left out or unworthy.

As I reflect on this scripture, I feel some unease and frustration, not due to the text itself, but because of what some people have made of it. The retreat's exclusivity seems to contradict Jesus' teachings and witness. It is important to remember that the true message of this passage is about Jesus revealing himself to those with open hearts, regardless of their status or background.

Here I am reminded of the Apostle Paul's understanding of who is worthy: *there are none who are righteous [worthy] - no not one.* (Romans 3:10)

So, I come to this scripture text with a certain amount of anxiety and resentment, not because of what it says to me, but because of what some people have made it. What this Retreat is about seems counterintuitive to what I understand about Jesus and his witness.

In seminary I learned a wonderful way to *explain* Jesus quite simply: *Jesus reveals God's love to the people.* Jesus *shows* us how to love. He did not exclude people. He even included the Pharisees, scribes, and Sadducees in his witness, although they would not accept his message because they were too proud and arrogant to accept it. It kept them from receiving his words and accepting his actions as extending the love of God to *all* the people: rich and poor, women and men, blind and deaf, crippled and lame, thief and beggar. Any whose hearts were open were able to receive his love, grace, mercy and forgiveness.

As a pastor I used to love Lent and Easter time. It gave me an opportunity to travel through the highs and lows of Jesus ministry, and to shed some light on the total *inclusiveness* of God. Our text today says, *Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.* I will quote a few that have been particularly influential for me in my ministry about the *inclusiveness* with which I view Jesus' ministry and message:

Isaiah 48:6: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light *to the nations*, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Ezekiel 34:15-16: "I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy, I will feed them with justice."

Micah 6:8: "He has told you, O Mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

Genesis 12:3: The promise of God to Abraham: "I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you *all the families* of the earth shall be blessed."

And finally from Jesus himself, regarding inclusiveness and his calling; John 10:16-17: "I have *other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also*, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life to take it up again. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father."

Our hope is in a loving, present, and forgiving God. Jesus is our witness that God is real. Jesus reveals God's inclusive and unconditional love for us, and bids us to do likewise. Jesus reveals God's love through the scriptures and assures us of God's presence among us. Indeed *our hearts burn within us* when we see his love and know his presence among us.

That 2000 years after his life on earth ended, we still believe and share the stories of eons prior to his coming, proves to me that God is real. The stories morph and change, but the basic premise of a loving God who cares about all created beings - humans included - prevails.

As we move forward from Easter, let us allow ourselves to feel God's presence within us and burn with the desire to love and serve him/her faithfully always. Amen.