

Mystic Congregational Church, UCC

Mystic, Connecticut

Sermon from April 6, 2008

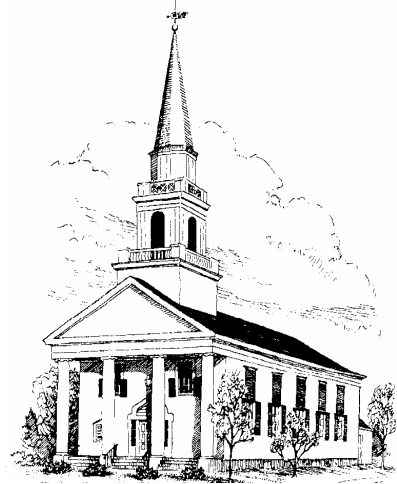
Rev. Barbara J. Libby

“On the Road”

Scriptures:

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

Luke 24:13-35



Today’s story of two travelers on the road who walk along with an unrecognized Jesus is a remarkable story both in its simplicity and in its ability to invite each of us into the narrative. This story is like many others in the biblical text that tell how God walks with humans and is not always recognized immediately. However, eventually, before the narrative is through the person does realize who it is that is there with them. This story is a transcript of the human experience. This is a story about you and me on the road, on the road of our lives.

The two travelers in today’s reading from Luke are coming out from Jerusalem on their way home after having been in Jerusalem for the Passover celebration, on what we now call the afternoon of Easter Sunday. During their time in Jerusalem these two folks have been privy to the events surrounding Jesus. They knew about his arrival into the holy city on a donkey, celebrated as a king. They had heard about his arrest, his trial, and his sentence of death. They knew about his death on a cross like a common criminal and his subsequent burial in a local tomb.

These travelers had also already heard that just that morning the tomb has been found empty in spite of the guards. They had also heard that angels had told the women at the tomb that Jesus was somehow alive. And then, here on the road home, they encounter a stranger, one who walks with them, listens to them, establishes a relationship with them, and one who lets them come to recognition and awareness in their own good time.

The Risen Christ does not rush them or push them. He listens to their story and he reviews his own understanding of the scriptures and the expectations for the Messiah. He gets invited to supper with the travelers but it isn’t until he breaks and blesses the bread that they suddenly realize who he really is.

That is how we each come to faith, isn’t it? There is the ring of truth to what happened to these travelers for we don’t always “get it” at first. We often walk around with unclear vision, sometimes for a long time, and then suddenly, something clicks and we realize that the truth has been there all along.

On the road of our lives our faith comes in fits and starts. We have our doubts and our misgivings. We get tested over and over again. Our sight is not always clear. Our faith gets shaken up over and over again. Perhaps we, too, yearn for an encounter with the Risen Christ, an encounter that will help us to truly “see”.

Kubler-Ross once said that “Nothing happens by chance. There are no mistakes, no coinci-

dences. All events are blessings given to us to learn from.”

If that is a true statement, that nothing happens by chance (which I increasingly believe is true for my life), then all our days and all our journeys in this life are filled with possibilities—encounters and relationships, events and situations that become a whole package for each of us, a package of windows and doorways to walk through for our faith journey as God has planned it.

Each of us has encounters with people and situations on our journeys through this life that we do not understand or comprehend at the time. Our travels in this life are filled with people and circumstances that we don’t always “get” or “see”. Sometimes we don’t understand or even recognize what the encounter meant until later—maybe later in that same day or even years later in our lives.

One of life’s challenges is to be open and aware, to be mindful, of all that life offers us, to be fully present to each moment. And to be mindful of what we encounter on a daily basis is not easy. Like those two travelers on the road to Emmaus, our sight is often dim. It sometimes takes something specific to trigger our awareness and our comprehension.

For the travelers it took Jesus’ breaking and blessing the bread at table for their eyes to be opened. What does it take for your eyes to be really opened? What does it take for your eyes to truly “see” on the road?

We are not talking here about the literal eyes of sight. Rather we are talking about the eyes of faith. The Greek word for recognize used repeatedly in this Lukan text is the word meaning “to become aware, to come to know, to perceive and understand fully.”

Each of us yearns to get to the point of recognition in our life, that “Yes!” of faith. Each of us yearns to get to that “yes” deep in our souls for us to truly recognize the truth of God’s gift of grace.

If we are mindful, each of us walking at our own pace, we may be gifted the recognition to know about a loving and forgiving God who meets us wherever we are on the road, for it is on the road where it all happens.

Our faith is premised on a belief in the resurrected Jesus of Nazareth. Our faith is sustained by the gift that we come to know and recognize the Risen Christ on the road, in the breaking of bread and the sharing of the cup in the midst of the community of faith. Our faith is sustained by the gift that when we come to this table and in the sacrament, amidst this body of Christ, we can recognize the living Christ in our midst, walking with us on the road.

Let us be mindful and open to that moment of recognition! Amen.