

A 2014 Luke 24:13-35
14-05-04 3rd Sunday of Easter

God's beloved people, grace and peace to you in the name of our crucified and risen Savior, Jesus Christ.....Amen.....

You may or may not know, and may not even care that the Seattle Mariners signed a player named Robinson Cano last winter. He had been a great player for the Yankees for a number of years, and the NY team had tried to sign him for a little less money and not as many years as the Mariners did. So in the end he wound up in Seattle and is a Mariner.

This week the Mariners and Robinson travelled to NY to play the Yankees. It was Cano's first trip back as a player since he left the team, and fans booed him and booed, and berated him for leaving for more money. But Robinson decided to have some fun with the fans of NY.

So the day before the game, Jimmy Fallon and the crew of the *Tonight Show* set up a cardboard booth with a cutout of Cano in downtown and fans would go by and boo the cutout!! When Robinson himself came out from behind his picture to face them, everything changed – no longer just a story, he was face to face with these folks... and the handshakes and hugs ensued! There was embarrassment and changes of heart toward him....

We meet two of Jesus' followers walking to Emmaus today. Well, actually we only meet Cleopas. These 2 have left Jerusalem. Jesus has been killed, the disciples had fled and hidden themselves away out of fear, and it's been three days, and then that story that the women told.... What... is going on? So they're in the middle of their conversation trying to figure it all out when a third person shows up.

Spoiler alert... WE the readers know its Jesus – of course after 2000 years just about every Sunday is a spoiler alert kind of day.... We're let in on the secret right away, and so we read this story with tainted eyes and maybe even a smirk on our faces. So when Jesus asks what they've been talking about and Cleopas basically asks him if he's been hiding under a rock – my first thought was, “Weeeeell... Not exactly under...” “Don't you know the things that have taken place in Jerusalem these days?”

Then Jesus gives Cleopas what might be greatest set up line ever:
“What things?”

“The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in word and deed.....” And the whole story comes pouring out of Cleopas' mouth in a jumble.

And somewhere in there he says, “**But we had hoped...**” **But we had hoped**.... We had hoped that he was not just a prophet, but the one who would redeem Israel.

One person's blog that I read this week said that these words are the some of the saddest words in all of scripture. **We had hoped**.... **We had hoped** are words of despair... these are words of “having-given-up”... **We had hoped** are words of confusion... and doubt... and questions... and worry and lost-ness... and defeat...

We had hoped that he was the redeemer....

We had hoped that the illness was gone this time....

We had hoped that a job would come through....

We had hoped that treatment would work....

We had hoped that the peace talks would make a difference....

We had hoped that counseling would save our marriage....

We had hoped that the relief supplies would have arrived in time....

We had hoped that death and suffering were far away....

In the disciples' world, Jesus was dead... the women had told them a far-fetched tale...

Jesus' body was gone... and all that was left for them to do now was to go home. **We had hoped**... are the words that close the book on the Jesus movement in 1st century Palestine.....

But we know what happens in the rest of the story. One of the toughest parts about really getting into these after Easter stories and letting them work on us is that we already know what's up – Jesus is risen!!

But let's try to let these disciples teach us today. Let's try to enter into their pain and confusion, because in our lives we do experience the depth of pain that can lead us to “we had hoped...” As we read this, we know that even as they are saying those words, Jesus is gonna pop out from behind the broken bread to surprise them. And their hope restored, they will say, “I knew it all along!!”.... But the great relief they felt was only because the despair had been lifted.

So, which sermon do we want to hear this morning?:

the, “everything is going to be okay because Christ is risen, so all your worry is wasted time,” sermon; or...

the, “if only they had known their scriptures better they would have been able to interpret all the signs Jesus pointed out, even though the Pharisees and scribes had taught everyone what they had thought was true but it turned out to be wrong or at least inadequate” sermon; or...

the “life is really, really hard sometimes; and my questions and doubts rise up in my throat because I can't see things improving any time soon, and this really stinks,” sermon?

I had thought about having 3 different endings and then having us take a vote in some way to determine which way we would go... but there are too many logistics with that option, so we're going to go with the Scooby-Doo ending and face our fears until it's time to pull off that mask at the end.

These 2 disciples are here for us to walk with – they walk with us on our Emmaus roads... those painful, lonely, long, strolls in the darkening day, when hope is a distant smudge in the side-view mirror that already says “things are bigger than they appear!” And we think, “THAT far away? How long, O Lord?!” I was hoping that you would get me out of this mess!! If you are truly the Messiah, come down off that comfortable cross of yours up there and save me from my “meaningless-consumer-driven-life!”

One of the real obstacles that we face when life gets hard is that despair causes us to turn on Jesus – and not only him, but when we are mired in our addictions, our pain, our denial, our selfishness, or when trial after trial seems to come our way and we can't figure out why, despair causes us to turn on everyone around us, too. Pain is all consuming and it destroys not only **our** lives, but it likes to spread to the lives of those around us, too, like dementors that use up one person and then move on to the next....

If you aren't walking an Emmaus road these days, give thanks and praise to God. But if you ARE on one of those lonely roads, I wish there was more to give you. I wish it were a simple fix. I wish it were as simple as that saying, “Time heals all wounds,” but a phrase like that only **really** helps IF and when trials and tribulations finally go away or are overcome. It's hard to hear words like that when wounds are gaping open.

Another piece of well-meaning advice that will come our way when we are feeling low is, “All you need to do is to try harder!”..... Oh, so now it's all MY fault?? I can fix it all by myself?? If that were the case then I wouldn't really need a redeemer at all,... and I really, really

want a redeemer. **We had hoped**.... We know that we need help... we know that we need a redeemer because sometimes we CAN'T take care of things by simply trying harder!!

So here we are, gathered together in God's house. Some of us on obvious Emmaus roads, and truth be told, perhaps all of us are in some way. Because no matter what road we are traveling, we still have our hopes for the Messiah and Redeemer. But our hope is not in one who will restore fortunes, or guarantee perfect health because we believe, or build empires; our hope is in one who holds our broken lives in his, just as we hold his broken life in ours.

And so today you will make your way up this narrow road, with someone next to you as you approach the altar. You will walk this Emmaus road carrying with you everything that pulls at you in your life, even those thoughts that would dare Jesus to make an appearance.

Everything that would trample on hope. And you will reach for the one who is always reaching out for you, hidden in the bread and wine.....

Amen.....