



Sermon April 27, 2025

Luke 24:13-35

There's a game I played a lot as a child that I'm sure most of you are familiar with—it's called telephone. Someone starts by whispering a sentence to the person next to them, who repeats it as best they can to the person next to them, and on and on, often resulting in a distorted final version. I like to think of the time after Jesus' death like a giant, extremely chaotic game of telephone among his followers because it is hard to overstate exactly how confused his followers are in the aftermath of his death and resurrection. They are still grieving his public death just days prior, many are in hiding, and then word gets out that his body is gone. Some believe the women who say he is resurrected; others have dismissed it as an idle tale. And at least two, Cleopas and his companion, have taken it upon themselves to get out of town as fast as they possibly can.

As Pastor Mike mentioned during Easter, Jesus was noticeably missing in our Gospel reading last week. Not just missing as in "not in the grave where he was supposed to be" but not present at all in the text. This section of Luke comes immediately after the resurrection narrative—this is the first appearance of Christ recorded in Luke after his death. The first appearance of Christ, and they don't recognize him at all.

And then they say this line that breaks my heart every time I hear it: "We had hoped". That one sentence to me ties up all the pain, confusion, and grief Jesus' followers are feeling in the aftermath of his death. "We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel" they say, but you can hear how much more they had hoped for. *We had hoped* he would be the one to save us. *We had hoped* he would be the one to fix this messed up system we live in. *We had hoped* that he would stop persecution and oppression, *we had hoped* that he would bring peace. We had hoped that Jesus would defeat our enemies, but Jesus was defeated as well.

It is clear that Cleopas and his companion have fully given up hope. Jesus has not met their expectations. They risked a lot by following Jesus, and for what? They had hope, and now they have disappointment. Better to get out of town while they can and try to forget they ever thought things could get any better.

The slide from hope to disappointment is a deeply human one, because it is so easy to get our hopes up. To think that this time could possibly be different. And so maybe you find yourself today with Cleopas and his companion. *We had hoped* that the test results would be different. *We had hoped* that the relationship would be healed. *We had hoped* that at this point in our lives, we would have more of life figured out. *We had hoped* for compassion and mercy in the midst of oppressive systems. *We had hoped*.

For Cleopas and his companion and maybe also for us, resurrection looks a little different from what was anticipated. For all the excitement around Easter, the actuality of the resurrection might sometimes feel a bit disappointing to us. Certainly, that is how Cleopas and his companion are feeling. The new life, the resurrected life, that Jesus brings might be different from what we had hoped for. It might be different from what we expected or what we had hoped for. Things look different after death; things look different in the light of the resurrection. Because new life is restorative, it is vital, but it also comes at a cost—it requires sacrifice, death, loss.

I think that the good news of this Emmaus Road story is that, even in our grief, even when things have not worked out how we had hoped, when we feel disappointed in ourselves, or our family, or our world, or even God, that we are not left alone. Christ is with us on the road and in our homes, reminding us that even when we feel too disappointed or cynical or grief-stricken to hope again, when hope feels too risky or vulnerable, that we can always find our footing in him.

Here is Jesus, in the midst of our despair, holding out bread and calling us to the table once more. Thanks be to God.

Vicar Jesse Hershberger