

LEARNING TO WALK WITH THE RISEN CHRIST

Luke 24:13-35

Dr. Doyle Sager

First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Missouri

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WATCH/LISTEN: <https://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/learning-to-walk-with-the-risen-christ/>

This story of the two walking on the Emmaus Road has captured the attention of artists all through the generations. It's easy for us to relate to. At some point during the current sheltering-at-home, haven't you said to someone, "Let's go for a walk"? I know Janet and I have enjoyed some wonderful late afternoon hikes. But for the two in our story, it began as a very sad walk. Jesus had been crucified. They are despondent, full of gloom. They are experiencing the ultimate physical distancing! Jesus was gone—or so they believed.

When the Risen Christ joins them on their walk, they don't recognize him. He asks what they are so glum about. They stop walking, look at him and ask, "Where have you been?" The two walkers almost scold Jesus. "Man, keep up with the bad news." But Jesus has a treat for them. "No. You two are the ones who need to keep up with the good news." Is it possible that the Risen Christ has joined you in your hour of pain and you're not even aware of it? If he has, wouldn't you want to know? There is a right-nowness, an immediacy to our relationship with Christ. The years and centuries collapse. He is here. He is now.

Now, Luke continues the story. Read vv. 28-35. "As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread."

Luke very artfully tells us what Jesus did as he ate with them. He took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them (v. 30), exactly the words of the Last Supper. It's only then, in the breaking of the bread, that their eyes are opened and they know they are in the presence of the Risen One.

Notice the balance in our walk with the Risen Christ. We need both scripture (v. 27) and personal experience (vv. 28-30). Is it one or the other? No. Some want to focus only on the Bible but grow brittle and legalistic. Others want to focus only on emotion and experience but grow mushy and spiritually lazy. It's both. Only a personal walk with Christ allows God's Word to make sense. It's like finally figuring out a Rubik's Cube or a jigsaw puzzle.

Jean Vanier writes that for us to stay free spiritually we must ask the question of accompaniment: Who is walking with me? He points out that the word “accompany” comes from a word which means “with bread.” Here it is—Jesus walking...with bread. Vanier goes on to remind us that we need accompaniment at every stage of our lives [*Becoming Human*, pp. 128-129]. We never outgrow our need to walk with Jesus.

Who is invited to walk with Jesus? To dine with Jesus? Were Jesus’ two walking companions without sin? Were they Bible scholars? Did they have it all figured out? No. They were just like us. Sinners, trying to get by in very uncertain times. The only qualification for walking and eating with Jesus? Inviting him to walk with you and eat with you. Inviting him in. Bring your joy, your struggles, your doubts, your shame. Jesus is waiting.