

Standing Till the End

Luke 24:13-35

Sunday, January 27, 2019

When we are smitten to enter a profession, follow a dream or a Christian calling, we are caught by the inspiration of how to achieve it and how to manage it. We are embraced by a hope that drives us to do all that is necessary to complete our dream. But then sometimes the dream becomes dim. We are frightened about our future, we can't see the end, so we get off the path we once desired. Hope is diminished in such a way as that we perceive all we have is what we have now. Disappointments diminish our life and then we settle. Sometimes in our dreams of marriage and building friends we feel the same. When we lose our close friends, our husbands and our wives, we struggle to find hope in each day in which we might find the embrace we used to experience. We realize that it is more than the person being gone that diminishes us, it is the dream we signed up for with them. Now it is gone.

In every community, in every church, in every family this is the same. We cannot escape it. Hope is diminished when we cannot see what the future might become for us. The same feeling must have been present in the people coming back from Jerusalem to their home town of Emmaus after the crucifixion. They must have felt the anguish of hopelessness. What they needed for the mission to continue was a vision of the future. At this point, there was no way they could have recognized Jesus walking with them. The hope of the messiah was over. The dream of a new world, a new life and a new hope is over as well. They were most likely contemplating the teaching of Jesus in the presence of his brutal execution. *But what does it mean if he is not here? How can they continue to live in a world that once was becoming hopeful, only to experience its dreadful crash?*

They must regroup like all of us do. But grief has its own path of ambivalence and pain. Life becomes what it is at times---a dry musty place with little light. When Jesus intruded into their conversation as they walked with the question about what they

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They must regroup like all of us do. But grief has its own path of ambivalence and pain. Life becomes what it is at times---a dry musty place with little light. When Jesus intruded into their conversation as they walked with the question about what they

were talking about, they almost seemed annoyed. They wanted to talk about their failed hopes, but Jesus wanted them to come out of their stopper. After he got them to turn from their pain they told him about the events, but with a sense of finality. When they had finished completing their gloomy story it was Jesus' turn to get annoyed at them. He said, "How foolish you are to interpret the events as the end. The prophets foretold the Messiah would suffer and die and then enter his glory. Didn't you listen to them?"

What we have in this story is Jesus as the first missionary. He is the first evangelist of the whole story of the cross and resurrection. He wants to stand in the middle of people who are discouraged by the events of life that turn their hopes into dust. He makes himself available after his resurrection to create the hope necessary to carry his disciples into their task. Therefore, his resurrection is not just an event that happened in the past from which we get hope; it represents Jesus' continued desire to teach us how to live. Jesus is still in the midst of us and standing with us to the end.

While he was with these individuals walking to Emmaus, he was not only helping them to see, but helped them to become missionaries, as well. He gained their trust, he was able to teach them what he knew and his compassion for them burned in their heart, even after he left them. When he did leave them what did they do? They immediately returned to Jerusalem---the place where they lost their hope. They found the disciples and told them about their encounter. They had become messengers of the story. They carried Jesus and his message in their hearts. Jesus worked hard to show them God's love, so they want to do the same. But for them to catch the fire, it will take some time. Jesus stayed with them until their eyes were open. He stood with them to the end of their questions and the end of their flood of grief. He stood with them all the way until the darkness that prevented them from seeing the truth of the events was lifted.

Mission's work takes a commitment to walk all the way to the end. Like Jesus who went all the way to the cross and walked with a group of people to Emmaus and back, until his work was done. He stayed until their eyes were open.

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