

**Sermon from April 8, 2018**  
**Pastor Eric Fjeldal**

***“Broken and Blessed” – Luke 24: 13-35***

Although not often thought of as such, today’s story is truly an Easter Story - a story of how God’s resurrection power transforms. It is a story that also reminds us, not only of how blind we can be, but what can happen when we open ourselves and begin to look, not for what we expect, but for what God can, will, and is doing. This is a message we and our world need to hear more often.

One of the overlooked pieces of this story is those to whom Jesus appears. It is not the eleven remaining disciples, nor is it the women, which is to say, it is not the inner circle of those who knew Jesus best. Jesus appears along the road to those who knew of him, and while they may have witnessed events of Good Friday, they did play any special role, nor was their presence noted. They were the everyday people who had heard Jesus preach, liked what they heard, and hung their hopes on who they thought Jesus was. For they too *hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel*. They were part of the larger circle of followers, which is to say, they were people like you and me, interested, involved, hope-full, wishful and confused, for they only partially understood Jesus’ message.

They, like most, filtered what they heard through their agenda, which meant they let their wants and desires influence what they heard and believed. While their grief and sadness were real, as they walked along the road, those emotions were not the sole reason they could not recognize Jesus. Their limited belief in who Jesus was and what he proclaimed impacted their ability to recognize him in their presence. They wanted Jesus to be what they wanted. They wanted Jesus to do what they wanted, when in fact Jesus’ ministry and mission was different.

Haven’t we been guilty of the same behavior and thinking?

*Don’t we hear that God is omnipotent, all powerful, and interpret that to mean domination, control, the ability to give us what we want?*

*Don’t we hear that God is all knowing and think, if we just pray enough God will give them the answer, or tell us what to do?*

*Don’t we, to some degree, believe that faithfulness equals reward?*

*Don’t we, on some level, expect God to take care of and protect us?*

*Don’t we also reject certain parts of the message, those parts that proclaim a Creator and Savior who make us uncomfortable, or doesn’t fit with who we want God and Jesus to be?*

*At the same time, aren’t we reluctant to truly turn it over to God, and truly trust the process?*

*Don’t we also keep God at a distance?*

*Don’t we have trouble believing that if we stop trying to control the outcome, an awareness of what to do will emerge? This happens, not because God will tell us what to do, but rather because God journeying with us gives us the patience, faith, wisdom and strength to allow the answer to emerge.*

*Do we really believe and trust that God can take us from where we are to where God desires us to be?*

*Do we even want to go there?*

As Jesus walked with his two travelers along the Emmaus Road, he explained to them what his ministry was about, and how it is God works in the world. Barbara Brown Taylor, a popular preacher and author, describes our struggle with what Jesus said, when she writes:

*Christianity is the only world religion that confesses a God who suffers.  
It is not that popular an idea, even among Christians.*

*We prefer a God who prevents suffering, only that is not the God we got.*

*What the cross teaches us is that God's power is not the power  
to force human choices and end human pain.*

*It is, instead, the power to pick up the scattered pieces  
and make something holy out of them – not from a distance, but right close up. (God in Pain)*

The two travelers did not believe this until Jesus blessed and broke the bread. In that moment, their transformation began, as they begin to realize the power and hope of Easter, the miracle of grace, and its gift of new beginnings. A new beginning that does not deny the brokenness of life but offers healing and blessing amid that brokenness.

Too often the message we hear and proclaim is a Good Friday message. *We can't. It won't work. It costs too much. It won't bring about any real change.* We encounter an issue, crisis or problem, be it personal or social, and think, *that's just the way it is. There is no other solution.* In response, we retreat to our old camps and rhetoric, determined to stand our ground, think our old thoughts, and do it the same old way. The result, we wind up digging graves for ourselves and others. We do this, not out of spite or hostility, but because we let our fear, and need for security trap and bury us.

The Emmaus story tells us this is not what God desires for God's children. It is not the way God works. Death, despair, destruction, and disappointment may be inevitable, as may be difficulty, sorrow, and suffering, but they do not have the last word.

God has the last word, and that word is new life, hope, resurrection. Nadia Bolz-Weber, a well-known Lutheran Pastor, writes,

*The Christian faith, while wildly misrepresented in so much of American culture,  
is really about death and resurrection.*

*It's about how God continues to reach into the graves we dig for ourselves and  
pull us out, giving us new life, in ways both dramatic and small.*

And nowhere is this more evident, then when in faith, we, God's children, God's broken people, bless and break the bread.