

April 30, 2017, 3rd Sunday of Easter
Rev. Jen Nagel, University Lutheran Church of Hope

Acts 2:14a, 36-41, Luke 24:13-35

(Gospel Acclimation is sung)

You may be seated! Before I read the Gospel, let me say just a few words of introduction.

Introduction of this Gospel resurrection story, but also to our way of experiencing the Gospel this morning.

Our Gospel story is often titled the Road to Emmaus.

It's *one* of the resurrection stories that Luke tells us.

There's the Easter morning story that ends the verse before this:

"But Peter [as in the same Peter we heard preaching in our first reading from Acts today]

but Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves;

then he went home amazed at what had happened."

Then comes the Road to Emmaus story I'll share in a moment,

And finally there's the broiled fish on the beach story, where Jesus eats with them.

This Road to Emmaus story is one of my very favorites in the bible.

I love it, in part, for I find it accessible, two people, walking down a road,

life turned upside down by the events of the days before,

and Jesus comes and **walks** with them, **talks** with them, and **then they eat together**

What's not to love?!

This morning I invite you into what I call the "I wonder, I notice sermon".

Once upon a time when the call committee from Hope came to visit on a Sunday morning at Salem in

Uptown, my previous congregation, some from the committee experienced this style of sermon.

Ever since then I've tried to figure out how to use it here at Hope in the Sanctuary.

I've been slow to try it, for it relies on some significant participation by the community and in a big space

like ours I want to make sure people can hear well enough.

In that Easter spirit of new beginnings and some space for experimentation, let's give it a try.

Let me explain: Today we're all preachers and the gospel is our focus.

We're hearing again the scripture and then wondering about words and phrases, the story itself.

And noticing details and questions that arise.

Here's how it works: You've got the Gospel reading before you in the bulletin.

In a moment I'm going to read slowly, very slowly, and your job is to interrupt me—seriously, interrupt me. Don't just interrupt in any old way (hey, that reminds me of a story I heard one time...)

But interrupt in a very particular way, beginning your interruption with either the phrase "I wonder ..." or "I notice..." " You may want to jot those down. I wonder. Or I notice.

As you interrupt, I'll pause, for you to speak, I'll repeat what you said so that it's amplified, and then someone else may jump in and wonder or notice something else right then, or else I'll continue to read slowly until someone else does jump in and interrupt.

Here's how it might sound, starting at the very beginning of today's Gospel "*Now on that same day, two of them were going to a village called Emmaus.*"

I wonder which two they were.

Or I wonder why they are going to Emmaus.

Or I notice that they aren't all together any more.

Or I wonder how they might be feeling right then.

You get the idea.

Only two rules...

1. There are no wrong answers, let the Spirit lead us as a community.

You may feel silly or like you don't know enough, but really those can be the best interruptions.

Your job is to interrupt... It only works if you do interrupt: use your voice, dare to speak out.

2. Use the structure. Begin your interruption with I wonder... or I notice...

Ready? First we need to make sure we've got voices, we need to test them out.

My name is Jen.... What's your name? Have you had your coffee this morning?

Remember, I wonder, or I notice.

(READ)

So are there other things you noticed or wondered but didn't get to say?

Let's add them now, but please, try to still use that structure, I wonder... and I notice....

Thank you!

Let me share a few things I noticed and wondered, some we've touched on, others, less so.

First, I notice once again that theme of walking together and I wonder about all the conversations we have "on the road".

This week I've been thinking about those at the climate marches last Saturday and yesterday, walking together, talking, and those who will be part of immigration and employment marches on Monday. I've been thinking of Ann Kreider now in France, heading toward Spain, beginning the pilgrimage, the Camino de Santiago, walking the path, meeting others along the way, meeting Jesus along the way. I've been thinking of a few in our congregation who've experienced surgery this week, up and walking, but slowly, carefully, with great care.

And as these disciples walk, as they talk about all these things that have happened (surely the arrest, the crowds, the cross, the tensions and politics sweeping the city, but also the fears and worries in their own community) as they walk, that's when Jesus comes alongside to go with them.

I notice how they don't recognize Jesus.

And I wonder how often Jesus is right at our side, right in the midst of a conversation and its pain, and we don't recognize his presence.

I notice that phrase, "We had hoped that he was the one."

We had hoped, a past perfect verb conjugation.

And I wonder about all the dashed hopes we carry along.

The plan for the day that went haywire.

The opportunity that wasn't. The relationship we thought was the one, but no.

The child or loved one we had hoped might recover, but that didn't.

And there Jesus is, walking along with them, with their broken hearts, with their tears—walking with us.

I notice how dodgy Jesus is, and how he finally agrees to stay with them and then how he takes the bread, and blesses it and breaks it and gives it to them.

That's when they finally recognize him, both guest and host, one and the same.

It gives fresh meaning to that classic prayer:

Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest, and let these gifts to us be blessed.

Were not our hearts burning within us, they ask.

Many of you have heard about Chris Stanley this week.

Chris is a student at the U of M in the College of Biological Sciences.

He's into sustainability and Spanish, mindfulness and meditation, biking and adventures.

He's the student that reports tell us was swept into the Mississippi at dusk on Tuesday.

As far as I know, the search continues, as do the prayers.

Late Wednesday night I had an email from a staff person at the U.

It explained the situation and the struggle to cope of Chris' friends and classmates, and said, "I'm

wondering if you [all] might have ideas and space to support the students and university community."

On Thursday evening, a 100 or so students and friends, some staff and faculty, a few parents, gathered in

our Lounge, around a fire in the courtyard, and in the candle-lit, music-filled chapel and sanctuary.

Pastor Kate from Lutheran Campus Ministry and Jodi Pendroy, a staff psychologist from Student

Counseling Services, spoke about our emotions at times like this, and then they opened it up...

For nearly an hour those gathered told stories, powerful, beautiful, mundane, loving, cherishing, tear-filled,

stories about Chris, but about their faith, their sense of meaning and hope and fear.

Chris sounds like an amazing person, someone I'd like to know better.

I was so grateful that the staff person from the U reached out to ask if we could be a place of safety, a

place of support and comfort on this painful and uncertain road.

And I was grateful that we could say, Yes, come, and that we could make a space of grace and meaning.

Thank you for daring to notice and wonder together with me this morning—this gospel is rich, powerful.

And on the road, and in the conversations, and at the table—may Jesus meet us again, surprising us with

promises of new life and new hope, new grace, enough for today. Amen.