

Sermon
The Rev. Nancy Conklin
Sunday, April 23, 2023
Luke 24:13-35

“Let’s go for a walk.”

A welcome invitation to stretch our legs, speak our mind, share our heart. Long walks, be they with a good friend or a cherished family member, are conducive to deep and meaningful conversations, as simple chatter about daily life gives way to matters of the heart or pondering life’s big questions.

On that first day of resurrection, two of Jesus’ disciples embark on a long walk. They have decided to go home to literally leave Jerusalem behind them, which means they were walking away from the dawning of a new day as they headed west on the road to Emmaus. The two men appear to be in no hurry, their sluggish gait bearing the weight of their emotions. They strike up a conversation attempting to process and make sense of all the events of the past week in light of the fact that all they had longed and hoped for had vanished into thin air. Feeling as though following in the footsteps of Jesus to bring about freedom for their people had ended in total failure. Despondent because they had come to believe Jesus was the Messiah, but now it appeared their belief was misguided.

Shrouded in sorrow and disappointment, these two disciples are headed home to resume life as it had been before they left everything to follow Jesus. Suddenly, Jesus joins them on their walk and inserts himself into their deep conversation. Not with a bold pronouncement: “It is I, your Risen Lord walking alongside you.” Jesus, whom they do not recognize, interrupts them with a question “What are you two talking about?” — his motivation a mystery. Does Jesus want to hear their version of the events to glean the impact of those events on their own lives? Was the compassion in his voice seeking to know how they were feeling? Or, was Jesus doing what he was always prone to do — interrupt people’s conversations with a question?

All throughout his walk with those who desired to walk alongside him, Jesus masterfully used questions to reveal spiritual truth. In asking those questions, he wasn’t really seeking an answer or an explanation. Rarely did Jesus even wait long enough for people to offer one. Instead, like a surgeon using a scalpel, our Risen Lord used questions to delicately cut straight to the heart of a matter, seeking to move a conversation deeper and bringing his disciples to a new level of understanding. Jesus knows that an answer one searches for, wrestles with, and chases after is more valuable than an answer easily given.

“What are you talking about?” he asked. After expressing their astonishment of how anyone who had been in Jerusalem could not know what happened, the two men pour out their tale of shattered dreams and grave disappointment. Hearing the hopelessness in their voices, still Jesus doesn’t reveal himself as he did with Mary in the garden; instead, he asks another question. This long walk home has become a journey of the heart: “Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” Translation: Have you not been paying attention to God’s plan of salvation that has been revealed from the time of Moses until now? This time, while the

disciples scan through their religious education hoping to come up with an answer, Jesus begins to answer his own question. Not with an easy answer, but instead *walks seven miles with them* on the road and *discusses* with them: “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets,” he retold the story of God’s plan of salvation that reached its climax in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Even after the resurrection, the way Jesus chose to reveal himself was through conversation. As the disciples hungered for the truth and begged for more of Jesus’s presence — even when He was still hidden from them — He drew near and revealed Himself, as the only bread that would ever satisfy their hunger, the only answer that would ever satisfy their questions.

Spiritual hunger and curiosity come from within us. How do our own heart-to-heart conversations with our Risen Lord foster our own spiritual hunger and curiosity? Especially those times when we’ve lost hope, our dreams have been shattered, life hasn’t turned out the way we expected, or those moments that cause us to stop and mull over our lives trying to make sense of what has happened to us. We’re adept at bringing our own questions to Him — how might we let Jesus interrupt our conversation with his own questions? Questions that will bring us fuller understanding, much needed wisdom, and draw us more deeply into his presence. Might be an invitation for us this a.m. to take a long walk with Jesus, who cares deeply for those who walk with Him, who trust in God’s Word, who are filled with wonder and ask good questions.