

Sermon April 26th, 2020

Jesus Opens Our Eyes to See

Growing up in the 80s and 90s I watched a lot of sitcoms. One of my all-time favorites to this day is Seinfeld. I have all the seasons on DVD. Whenever I feel stressed out and need a good laugh I put on a Seinfeld episode from my collection and veg out. Let's just say, I've been watching a lot of Seinfeld these days.

In the early seasons there is an episode where Jerry, George, and Elaine, are waiting in this restaurant to be seated. They wait, and wait. At one point, someone coming out of the restaurant notices Jerry standing in the waiting room, and starts talking to Jerry like she knows him really well. Of course, Jerry doesn't remember who she is. So, Jerry pretends to listen as he is trying to figure out who this person is. Finally, near the end of the conversation she says something that sparks his memory.

What sucks about this revelation for Jerry is that this person is his uncle's secretary. The same uncle he lied to so he didn't have to go to his uncles gathering this very same evening. Busted.

How often have you found yourself in Jerry's shoes? Someone comes up to you who knows you very well. Starts talking to you like you are best friends, and yet, you can't remember who this is. You pretend to listen as your brain goes into overdrive trying to figure out who this person may be. You listen for any possible detail that could trigger your memory.

Sometimes by the end of the conversation we figure it out. Sometimes it is hours or even days later. Either way, we need a word or an expression that opens our eyes to see who this person is.

Well, in our gospel this morning, two people who followed Jesus are trying to make sense of all that went down. What did Jesus do to get arrested? Why did they kill Jesus? Why was the tomb empty? Where is Jesus' body?

As they are talking they come across a person who is interested in what they are talking about. So, the two people share everything that has happened to Jesus of Nazareth to this stranger. We as the audience are made known of the identity of this person, but the two on the road to Emmaus do not know who this is. For some reason they do not recognize that this stranger who walks with them is in fact the one they are talking about. Now, we can infer from Luke's words that God made it hard for them to see Jesus. But, we need to look at their current situation as well. They are confused, grieving, focused so heavily on what has just happened that their suffering has also made them unable to see the risen Christ as he stands before them.

Jesus goes on to point them to the scriptures teaching them why these things happened. The followers still don't recognize who Jesus is, but feel somewhat interested and comforted by these words. So much so, that they invite Jesus to stay with them for the night before Jesus continues his travels.

Jesus accepts their hospitality, and joins them for dinner. During dinner he breaks bread with them, and in this moment, they see the risen Christ. They see Jesus, and remember his teachings.

As we face suffering and pain in our lives we struggle to see Jesus at work even when Jesus is standing right in front of us. Pointing us to scripture. Sharing words of comfort and hope with us. Trying to open our eyes to see the resurrected Christ.

I can't imagine what our fellow Canadians are feeling in Nova Scotia as they wrestle with what has happened. Confused. Hurt. Frustrated. Trying to see where God is present. My thoughts and prayers are with all of you out there as you grieve.

For the past few months we have all been wrestling with what has happened in our lives. All the changes that have come as we live in these pandemic times. Confused. Hurt. Frustrated. Wondering when it will all end. Trying to see God's presence in the midst of this chaos.

Like the followers of Jesus, we meet someone on our road to Emmaus. On our road of suffering and discernment. We meet this someone who looks familiar, but whose image is faded. We try hard to see them, but can't quite make them out. We feel comfortable enough to share our current struggles with this someone. We lament. We are willing to listen to this someone's voice. What we hear is somewhat comforting. Somewhat promising. Enough so that we invite this someone into our homes to hear more.

What we see from our experience on our road to Emmaus. What we see when we cry out. When we listen. When we show hospitality to this faded individual is that we find ourselves sitting at a table with this someone watching as they say and do something that triggers our memories, our faith. Opening our eyes to see the presence of the risen Christ. Opening our eyes to see what Jesus is doing in our lives during this pandemic. During this time of grief.

Jesus reveals himself to us in many different ways. Jesus reveals himself to us when we experience the hospitality and love of others. Jesus reveals himself to us in our own actions of hospitality and love for others. Jesus reveals himself to us as we pray and lament. Often times in the silence as a calming peace comes over us. Jesus reveals himself to us in all the new and creative ways we have been able to interact with one another. Jesus reveals himself to us in all the ways we are learning and growing from

this experience. Jesus reveals himself to us on the cross by opening our eyes to a God who suffers with us. Who is willing to hang in the darkness with us. Jesus reveals himself to us in the empty tomb giving us hope in a God who turns death into life. Jesus reveals himself to us through our worship service as we gather online. In the Bible readings, the sermon, and the music that brings God's Word to life for us. Triggering our memories to name where Jesus is working in our lives. And when we are all able to gather again in person on Sunday morning, Jesus will reveal himself to us in the breaking of the bread.

Until this day, Jesus is walking with us on this road to Emmaus. Comforting us. Guiding us to places where we see the risen Christ working in our lives.

Let us pray, gracious God, we are at a loss for words of what has happened in Nova Scotia, and what is continuing to happen in our world during this pandemic. We lament to you God trusting that your mercy and healing will touch our lives and our world. Though, on our walk to Emmaus, we see only a faded version of you. We want to see you more clearly. We long to have you sit at our table and reveal yourself to us. Help us see where you are working in our lives to comfort, heal, and redeem us from our suffering. And grant us patience and hospitality to await that glorious day when all are able to gather at your table and experience your presence in the breaking of the bread.
Amen.

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