

“He’s Alive!” A sermon by Lee Ireland
Cathedral City Community Presbyterian Church
April 30, 2017 Third Sunday of Easter
Luke 24:13-35

Pastor Lee told this story today dressed as Cleopas.

Hurry up, let’s get going if we’re going to get back to Jerusalem tonight! You’re so slow!

Oh, hello. Have you heard the news?

He’s alive! He’s alive! Jesus is alive! What the women said was true!

That’s why we’re rushing back to Jerusalem – to tell the eleven that Jesus is alive. We saw him with our own eyes! Jesus is alive! The women were right!

Where’s my partner? He’s so slow. Oh, I guess I’ll have to wait for him. So, I have a moment. Let me tell you how it all happened.

We were walking back from Jerusalem to our hometown, Emmaus. We were so sad and walking slowly. Our minds were on the events of the past few days. We barely talked to each other. We were each lost in our own thoughts. The trip home was lasting forever. Time passes slowly when your mourning.

Why were we so sad? Haven’t you heard? Jesus of Nazareth, whom we had hoped was the Messiah, was crucified. We had hoped he was going to redeem Israel. But he was dead and buried. Our hopes were dashed!

As we walked along, a stranger joined us. We were not sure if the stranger needed company or if he would rob us. I was careful as I talked to him. I was suspicious of him when he said he knew nothing about Jesus’ trial and crucifixion! Where had this guy been the last few days?

I said to him, “Really, you know nothing about Jesus’ death?” That stopped us in our tracks!

The person who was a stranger to us was really Jesus, but we didn’t recognize him. He looked like any other person you’d meet. He didn’t look like I imagine an angel would look. There was nothing special about him. He looked like us. At that point, we had no idea that God had resurrected Jesus. So, we didn’t think he could be Jesus. We weren’t looking for Jesus, nor expecting him. Perhaps that’s why we didn’t recognize him. Have you had that happen to you before?

But this stranger – who turned out to be Jesus – started to talk to us. His voice was so gentle and assuring; like he was trying to help us through our grief. I was sure he understood our sadness and wanted to help us.

The stranger started talking about what the prophets and Moses had to say about the Messiah. He opened the scriptures to us, clarifying why the Messiah had to die.

We'd never thought about a suffering servant. We had only thought about a conquering Messiah who would defeat the Romans and return Israel to its people.

He was so knowledgeable. We didn't want him to stop talking!

We asked this stranger, that's Jesus, to stay and have dinner with us. For some reason, we just didn't want him to leave us. It took quite a bit of persuasion to get him to stay, but he finally said yes and joined us for dinner.

That's when we discovered or rather realized that this stranger was Jesus! It was Jesus! We recognized him when he broke the bread.

Jesus was always eating with others, sharing hospitality and kindness. We were familiar with that Jesus. Maybe that's why we recognized him when we sat down to eat together.

But then he disappeared. And now, if my partner ever catches up with me, we're going to tell the eleven that Jesus is alive! Jesus is alive!

I haven't had time to think about this, but our seven-mile walk home to Emmaus is really the story of my faith in Jesus. The first time I met him I didn't recognize that Jesus was the messiah. Like the stranger that came up beside us tonight, I just thought Jesus was just like us. Oh, maybe a great teacher, but nothing out of the ordinary. Then I began to see the healings and listen to his teachings. Jesus was no ordinary man, he was the Messiah. He was from God. I was excited about Jesus and all he was doing. And then he was killed. That certainly snuffed out the excitement! Up, then down.

But now I'm up again! Jesus is alive! I saw him with my own eyes. I touched him. He's alive.

JEFFREY FROM OUT IN THE NARTHEX. "Cleopas!"

What? How did you get ahead of me! I must catch up to my partner. We have to tell the eleven that Jesus is alive. Did I tell you – Jesus is alive!!