

During Lent, Susan and I have had a tradition  
the last couple of years of going  
to Catholic Fish Frys all around the area.

**This year, our own Mother Theresa had their first fry.**

Susan knows Father Mark Simpson,  
who was a student at Montgomery Bell Academy,  
during her 20 years there.

While I was in line, I did what I usually do.

I was watching everyone around us.

When I saw a guy come in, I thought I recognized him,  
but I couldn't figure out where I knew him from.

The face looked familiar, but the name escaped me.

Have you had that happen?

You look deep into someone's eyes and think for a second  
I know you... trying to connect the dots.

Where. When. Who.

You search all your memories and experiences.

And pray to God that it comes to you before they see you.

Finally, it came to me, Mike Campbell,  
from my time at Good Shepherd,  
where I had performed his wedding.

And he came and visited me on my first Sunday here.

Has that ever happened to you?

An encounter with an unrecognized or hidden identity?

Today, we have a big one.

**13 Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem.**

What same day is that?

Luke tells us that we are still talking about  
Resurrection Sunday, but in the afternoon.

There are two disciples,  
not part of the Eleven remaining that Jesus had picked,  
but these two were followers of Jesus  
who had been there when the women  
told about the angel's glorious testimony.

We do not know the exact location of the disciples' encounter  
or the exact location of Emmaus,

Or why they are on this journey.

Perhaps they were fleeing the possible danger  
that was now in Jerusalem or headed home defeated.

As they were walking, another person began to walk with them.

**15 As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them.**

They encountered Jesus himself but had no clue.

**16 but they (their eyes) were kept from recognizing him.**

We don't know why.

Perhaps Jesus wanted to see if these two followers would understand the events that had transpired over the last three days, or wanted to find out what his followers were saying about him.

We don't know the reason.

We do know that it was the work of the Holy Spirit because Luke tells us that.

We hear this story now and think they must have been pretty dense.

And think I wouldn't miss Jesus if he were standing right next to me.

But if we are honest, **Do we recognize Jesus each time we encounter him?**

If Jesus were to come into this sanctuary or meet us at the store and say hi, would we recognize his voice?

We have to ask ourselves, do we recognize the times when God is trying to tell us something?

If you are anything like me, the answer is no.

So that leaves me with a question for our lives...

what prevents us from seeing Jesus more clearly?

Hearing his hidden voice and where he is walking with us on our journey?

So there they are, a disciple named later Cleopas and a companion—a friend, brother, or maybe his wife.

This might be the same Cleopas and his wife who was one of those at the cross with Mary and went to the tomb with the other Marys.

Amid their animated discussion about all that's been going on, they suddenly notice that a stranger has joined them.

Who is it? We know it's Jesus, but they don't.

**17 He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"**

They're flabbergasted, their faces downcast.

**18 One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"**

How is it that this stranger doesn't know about the shocking things that have taken place during these last few days in Jerusalem?

Let's savor the moment and appreciate the irony here:  
this uninformed "stranger," Jesus, is the only one  
who actually does know what's going on.

But you know, an even greater irony?  
those of us who think we get it the best can forget the most.  
We can forget that God is still changing lives.  
We can begin to question and ask, does  
anything that I do really make a difference?  
We can ask: Where is God in all of this?  
Our family and I have certainly asked  
that question this week in Mandy's diagnosis.

For some, Jesus was a stranger walking along the road  
at the beginning and by the end, he at least had  
become a friend and, for some, a Savior.  
In this encounter, Jesus' voice is  
eclipsed by their grief, doubt, and anguish.  
They want to believe the end had not come for Jesus,  
but the fact that they were on the road out of the city  
shows us they could not believe.  
It is interesting that in every post-resurrection story,  
We have found that Jesus is not initially recognized.

**24:19 He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth,**

This was a heartbreaking experience.  
Here is a fun, not-so-fun fact.  
Have you ever noticed that some of the saddest words  
in our language begin with the letter D?  
For example, disappointment, doubt,  
disillusionment, defeat, despair, and death.  
All of these are summed up in the words of Cleopas  
and his companion to the stranger  
who joined them on the Emmaus Road.  
They had left the dispirited and confused band of disciples  
with the events of Good Friday fresh in their memories.  
Their hopes were dashed and the dream was over.  
The band of Jesus' followers was leaderless  
and was falling apart, with two of them already on their way home.  
Since then, even stranger things have happened.

**In addition, some of our women amazed us with stories of angels.**

The reports that Christ's tomb was empty

did nothing to alter their thinking; it only confused them.

Their entire world had come apart.

The two despondent disciples summed up the situation very neatly,

**"we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel."**

What they were saying is

"We don't expect it now, but once we did.

Maybe you, like I, can identify with that.

Has something or someone come between our relationship with God?

At the heart of their confusion is the failure

to understand what Jesus has been trying

to teach them since they left Galilee:

the Messiah must suffer, die, and be resurrected—

and his disciples must take up their cross and follow him.

At this point, we can almost feel Jesus' frustration.

He can't hold himself back any longer.

**25 "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.**

So, as they walk along together,

Jesus, without revealing himself,

gives them a remedial lesson in Messianic Destiny 101.

Then comes the turning point in the story.

**28 As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther.**

Wait a minute!

They still haven't recognized him.

If they simply say goodbye at this point,

the significance of the entire Emmaus encounter would be lost.

They don't know it,

but it's really a test since he had taught them

about showing hospitality to strangers.

**But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.**

They remind him that it's late.

They urge him to stay with them,

to enjoy a meal together. Jesus accepts.

By now in Luke's Gospel,

we know that whenever anyone sits down to dine with Jesus,

it's always meaningful and often miraculous.

Sure enough, **When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him**

They can see now. –

just as he disappears from their midst.

If this sounds familiar,

it's almost certainly because this isn't the first time

Jesus has demonstrated who he is through the breaking of bread.

After all, that's exactly what happened

back in Galilee when he fed the five thousand.

It was after he blessed and broke the bread,

that suddenly there was more than enough to feed everyone.

And afterward, the first thing Jesus asks his disciples is,

"Who do you say that I am?"

**32 They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"**

And finally, it became too much to ignore.

They had to see it.

I'm not saying it's Jesus, but it's Jesus.

Sometimes we have those moments too.

When it just becomes too much to ignore, our encounter with Jesus.

When our eyes, for however short a time, are opened wide.

When our ears and hearts can hear his hidden voice.

It was the summer of 1995 when I decided to go to seminary at Emory University and I had that kind of encounter.

I was a new Christian.

I wasn't sure what God wanted me to do with my life.

So I pushed everyone out of my life, tried to shut out the noise.

Especially for a while, dating Hannah's mom, Mandy.

I couldn't argue it away anymore;

the hidden voice was clear,

and I had to believe Jesus was speaking to me.

**33 They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together**

But do you know the thing that strikes me every time

I read this text?

It is what those two disciples do

once they realize they've been

in the company of the resurrected Jesus.  
They get up from that table and go directly back  
to Jerusalem, away from safety and back to a place of persecution.  
Because of this Emmaus encounter with Jesus,  
they realize they've been going the wrong way.  
They need to return to be with the rest of his followers,  
because following the Messiah means making him Lord,  
putting our life at his disposal—even if it's risky.

Clopas and the rest of the disciples  
shared their stories of the risen Christ  
and strengthened each other's faith.  
They met together and held each other accountable.  
It reminds me that we can certainly find salvation in Jesus by ourselves  
But we can't be followers without being together...

Because these disciples trusted in him as their Messiah,  
they let him be Lord over their lives,  
maybe not all the time,  
but often enough that others began to notice.  
And then they met and helped others understand  
that he was the Messiah, and, before long,  
more and more lives were turned around.

So, what started as a movement of no more  
than 100 disciples became billions.  
That's what happens when we Christians  
not only confess with our words,  
but demonstrate with our lives,  
that Jesus is our Lord and Messiah.  
When we encounter the hidden voice of Jesus  
and the power of the resurrection,  
**We learn that the road to Emmaus**  
**Was the road back to hope for them.**

And for us, we see the need to recognize  
Jesus is in our lives, and to hear his hidden voice  
through scripture, prayer,  
the breaking of bread, solitude  
**and through the others on the journey with us.**

So what is preventing you from hearing his hidden voice  
And seeing Jesus more clearly in your life?

