

EASTER EVENING

Luke 24:13-35

We're a funny bunch, we humans, we get so wrapped up in our conversations and we're so focused on what we're going to say that we aren't listening. There are people for whom the saying "couldn't get a word in edgewise", holds true. Sometimes we talk so much that God can't "get a word in edgewise", especially if He comes in a gentle whisper.

There is a time for talking and there is a time for listening. Our Gospel this evening is about two friends who were talking when they should have been listening. We don't know much about them. There were two of them, but we're not sure of much more than that. All we know is that one of them was named "Cleopas". Whoever they are, they're completely disillusioned. That week they had been with Jesus. It had been a great week, at least until Jesus had been arrested, tried, and crucified. Now all their hopes and dreams were shattered. Poof. Gone. Slowly, in low spirits, they were making their way home.

Oh, they had hung around for a while after hearing the rumors about an empty tomb. Peter and John went to the tomb and confirmed that it was empty. So at about 5:00pm they are on the road to Emmaus, having one of those "can't get a word in edgewise" yarns. "Can you believe how they turned on Jesus"? "Did you see the tears in the eyes of the centurion whose servant Jesus healed"? "Did you see the way Peter denied ever knowing him"? "Did you hear His words as He hung on the

cross”? And as they are walking along, a stranger enters into their conversation and asks what they’re talking about. Amazed at the thought that this stranger had no idea of what had happened over the past three days, they told him, to which the stranger replies with yet another question, “What things”? Through all this they did not recognize Jesus. They were so wrapped up in their own thoughts that they just didn’t see Him because there was a supernatural force at work. God was at work. Jesus was right in front of them and the two failed to see. There are times that God is at work and we don’t even know it. Our eyes don’t recognize it at the time.

These two travelers were downcast. The problem was, they were hoping for a political Messiah, a Messiah who would deliver their nation from the oppression of Roman rule. And now this Messiah was dead. And so was their hope. In the matter of just a few hours on Friday, their hope was shattered. Maybe some of our hopes have been shattered. A marriage that ended in divorce? We had hoped when we said ‘til death do us part”. We had hoped this person might be the one. Maybe our adult children haven’t embraced our faith in Jesus. We had hoped. Hope is bright and promising, full of potential. But it is also fragile. Something unexpected happens and hope is shattered. That’s these two travelers on the road to Emassus.

Their hope was shattered. They arrive at their home and Jesus is ready to leave them, but they stop Him from going. Our Gospel passage says, “they urged Him strongly. ‘Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over’”. So He went in to stay with them. Notice it doesn’t take much to get Jesus to stay. All we have to do is invite Him. So invite Him in. He’ll be more than happy to come and stay.

Quickly, the wife clearing up and picking up, maybe throwing another plate on the table, probably shooting dirty looks at Cleopas for not letting her know in advance that he was bringing home company. But they continue to visit, still clueless as to who they were talking to.

Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him. The same supernatural force that prevented them from seeing Jesus, opened their eyes to who this Man really was. And Jesus, in the breaking of the bread, restored their hope. Then our story says that, “They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem”. It was probably eight or nine o’clock by now. It was a seven mile journey back to Jerusalem. In the dark. In a region where you didn’t travel at night. They could have waited until morning, but that same night they started back. They got on that same road.

The road that had been marked by defeat. Marked by shattered hopes. Now the road was different. The road was full of possibilities. Same road – different destination; same road – different conversation; same road – different observations; same road – different realization.

They couldn’t they wait to get back to Jerusalem because hope had been restored, their dream had come true, He was alive!

They went back to Jerusalem to tell everybody the good news.

They found the eleven and their companions gathered together.

They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon”! Then they told what had happened on the road, and how He had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. Jesus restored their hope in the breaking of the bread, just as our hope is renewed every time we take part in Holy Communion. The Eucharist is not a snack and it’s not just bread. Jesus at the Last Supper, blessed the bread, broke it, and gave it to His disciples. Bread, one of the basics of life, was

blessed by Jesus. And after that blessing, we cannot look at bread in the same casual manner. The bread is a symbol of Christ's body given for us that we are to take and eat in remembrance of Him.

Therein lies our hope, in the redemption won for us in Jesus Christ. Jesus restored their hope in the breaking of the bread and as we take and eat, our hope is restored and we can see Jesus.

Let us pray: Father God, every time we come to your table at the Eucharist, open our eyes to You, that we might see You in the breaking of the bread, just as Your two disciples from the Emmaus road did so long ago. The seeds planted in the plowed fields, the rain that waters, the fertilized soil, the wheat harvested, ground into flour, mixed into dough, and baked into bread. Lord we know that You are in all of these things. The bread is blessed and thereby we are blessed. Thank you, Lord.

AMEN.