

May 7 8, 2011  
Easter 3A  
Luke 24:13 – 35  
Start Seeing Jesus

You've probably seen the bumper sticker, "Start Seeing Motorcycles." It's especially appropriate now in springtime when it's good riding weather. I know several of you are avid bikers. I had a scary experience last spring on 41 north. I needed to make a lane change, put on my blinker, check my mirrors, and looked back over my shoulder, and I didn't see a motorcycle. Thanks be to God the driver anticipated my mistake and had slowed down, so I didn't hit him. My car was new to me, and I didn't realize how much one of the rear head rests obstructed my view. When I got back to church, I pulled that headrest out and it now rides on the floor of the car, unless I have a passenger back there. I thought I was good at watching for bikers, but I'm even more careful now. Start seeing motorcycles.

How good are you at watching for the newly risen Christ? Here we are at the third Sunday of Easter. We started with Mary and Joanna, then Thomas and the other disciples, and today Cleopas and his companion, all experiencing, seeing the newly risen Christ. I worry that we've got him too high on a pedestal, too far in the past. Friends, I sometimes wish Bibles didn't have back covers on them. Now, they need to, because it was a holy process that brought us our scriptures, that sorted out the wackadoodle stuff and gave us the good stuff, but I worry that that back cover, the way we sometimes treat these experiences of God and Jesus, puts too much distance between us and them. We forget that our experiences of the living Christ, of God our creator, are divine experiences, too. Like Cleopas and his companion's experience. Jesus didn't stop appearing to people on the last page of the New Testament. So maybe use those blank pages at the back of your Bible to add your stories of seeing God and seeing Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

Today's gospel story is an amazing invitation to us to start seeing Jesus, if we aren't already. Prof. David Lose, of Luther Seminary, in his column this week, points out that the 24<sup>th</sup> chapter of Luke does just fine if you skip from verse 12 to verse 36, that he wonders if Luke, in his final edit, added this story to show his community, those who hadn't experienced the living Jesus, so didn't know how to see the living Christ, if he added this story to give them eyes to see the living Christ. Them and us.

Have you noticed that the freshly resurrected Jesus didn't appear at the temple, in Jerusalem, but instead went out from the grave to where the disciples were eating, out on the road with them. So if we want more than the weekly does of the risen Christ we hopefully get here, if we want to meet him in glimpses of holy moments and holy encounters with people, we need to start seeing Jesus. Probably not in our rear view mirrors, like motorcycles, but beside us and ahead of us, asking us to follow him. A favorite preacher of mine, and of some of you, Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor, talks about today's scripture this way: "But (Jesus) will not stay, that is the truth of it – he will not stay put, stay the same, stay with us. 'Stay!' is our chorus, but his refrain is, 'Follow!' Follow me, he says over his shoulder as he moves out into the world, broadcasting his Holy Spirit, blending into the crowd of humanity so well that, if we choose to go after him, we must search every face on the off chance that it might be his. Those are our choices, it seems: we can beg him to stay with us or we can follow him. We can plead with him to stay put and, when he does not, we can sit alone with our memories.... Or we can go after him and plunge into the crowd right behind him. Although the sea of faces that parted for him closes back in on us, we can still catch a glimpse of him here and there in the face of a gardener, a foreigner, a stranger on the road. If we are thorough we will handle each person we meet with care, just in case it is Jesus; if we are diligent we will wash some feet along the way, feed some hungers, soothe some sorrows, just in case they are his. You can never be too sure.....Chances are that in looking for Jesus and wanting so much to find him, we will begin to see a little bit of him in everyone we meet. So the problem with this approach is that the whole human race may begin to bear a family resemblance to the one we seek...." Thank you, Rev. Taylor. (Mixed Blessings, pp. 1 – 72, Barbara Brown Taylor, 1986)

*As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and 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.*

Christ has risen. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, other women, Thomas, the other disciples, Cleopas and his companion; they all saw Jesus, experienced his presence. And one time or another he's appeared to you, or you wouldn't be here. We aren't celebrating communion today, to meet him again in the breaking of the bread. But just like Cleopas and his companion, you can start seeing Jesus, glimpses of him, along the roads of your life, in events, in people you meet – loved ones and strangers, mothers and those who are like mothers to you and share Gods' love with you. Instead of only looking behind us at the risen Christ in scripture, or anticipating meeting him after this life, let's start seeing Jesus here and now. Thanks be to God for life after death, and for these scriptures after Easter that teach us we can find ways to start seeing Jesus and allow him to lead us through this amazing life, continuing his work of extravagant welcome and healing and justice for all God's people.