

**April 30 2017**

**Reading from the Bible** Luke 24: 13-35

**Sermon** “Do you know him”

Earlier in this same chapter of Luke we find the women arriving at the tomb and discovering that Jesus was not there; he had risen from the dead. In today’s reading we discover what else happened on that day.

“Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus...and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking discussing Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

They didn’t know Jesus? Two of his closest disciples didn’t know him! In had only been three days since they had dinner with him. Now, on Sunday afternoon, they don’t know him.

Here is our question for today, class. **Why didn’t they know him?**

“Their eyes were kept from recognizing him”. But why?

....now and then some sweet person will say something like, “I just don’t get it; God has never spoken to me. When I tried prayer, I was just talking to myself. This whole religion thing just sounds like so much hooey.” We are just like them. We are all walking down the same road, yet so many people don’t see.

Perhaps, you say. “They are stupid and we are all brilliant.” Maybe, I am certainly willing to entertain that possibility.

But perhaps, their “I just don’t get it” may not be a testimonial to their lack of intelligence but rather to their possession of a particular kind of intelligence.

There is among us a sort of intelligence that has been wonderfully productive of all sort sorts of good things: bridges, penicillin, fax machines, quantum physics. And yet that same intelligence—so enamored with empiricism, facts and figures, and common sense—has its limits.

Almost any college or university in America, I suspect an inquirer would find more students doing quantifiable thinking. Things like statistics, matter, and money than qualifiable things. (Thoughts of beauty, right & wrong, good & bad). Think about it business school is quantifiable thinking. What do I mean by quantifiable thinking? The business school is usually the largest classes of any university more than liberal arts. When I think about qualifiable thinking a sorority had an auction for some worthy cause. Members of the faculty were asked to donate services to the auction. One faculty member agreed to donate 10 hours in tutoring algebra. Another, being in the business of words, offered to write a love letter to the person of the bidder’s choice. The highest bidder on the letter, a young woman showed up later at the professor’s office. The professor had really expected the highest bidder

to be a man. “Why do you need an old guy like me to write a romantic letter for you,” he said.

“I’m studying electrical engineering” she replied. He could see her point. There are certain disciplines of mind that just don’t lead to imaginative and quantifiable thinkers. There are Joe Friday’s of the world who want only “the facts, ma’ma” and there are those who do not want to be confused by the facts. Isn’t the world a wonderful place? Some people read the scripture, and it immediately touches their heart. Others say they find nothing meaningful in scripture.

Augustine, possibly the most important theologian of the past 2,000 years, lived just 400 years after Jesus. As a bright young man with a superior classical education, he confessed to Bishop Ambrose that he had tried to read the Bible, but frankly, he was unimpressed. To him Bible seemed like inferior literature, crudely written, poorly edited.

“You young fool,” replied Ambrose, “You can’t get it because when you read the Bible about ‘fish’, and you think ‘fish’. When you read ‘bread’, you think bread.

Ambrose explained to him the spiritual depth of Scripture; he showed young Augustine levels of meaning beyond the surface appearance of things.

Thus, years later, after entering this strange new world of the Bible, Augustine was sitting under a tree in a garden. He hears a child singing. “take up and read, take up and read”.....Is it the voice of a child or an angel?....By this time his imagination is so excited, his consciousness so heightened, that he can’t tell the difference.....He does what the voice says, takes up the Bible, flops it open to an obscure passage from Romans, and his life is changed forever. After that he is better known as “Saint Augustine.”

Do you remember your English or American literature classes? I do. Remember me? I took that class with you. That was me—in the back, yeah, the one who just never seemed to get it. Our professor, she would do her best to explain to us the use of allegory. For example, Herman Melville, in his book *Moby Dick* was supposed to have written a powerful allegory of good and evil. Did you believe that? I mean, to me it just seemed like story of a man seeking revenge on a white whale.....it appears that my parents were wasting their hard earned tuition money on me because I believed a fish is a fish, a tree is a tree, and a whale is a whale. I might as well have still believed the world was flat. I believed a mystery was to be explained and a miracle disproved. Everything going on out there is the result of some natural cause and everything going on in here is because of something my folks did to me when I was three.

It’s the modern world... closed, fixed, demystified, disenchanting, and dull. Everything has its reason and is explained. Don’t expect surprises and, if by God’s

grace a surprise really occurs don't expect to get it because you've lost the means even to know a surprise if you get one.

Today, I do believe that Melville used allegory in ways that were far beyond my mind when I was 18. I also read the Bible differently than I did when I was younger. No longer do I read it only for the plain reading of the words: for the literal meaning. It is a much richer source of inspiration than that. It is textured with meaning that might appear different according to the needs of my spirit. It is like an onion; with layers of meaning that reveal themselves only as we strip away the meanings that may have seemed obvious to us when we first began to consider the onion.

Why didn't they recognize Jesus when they walked along the road with him? We defeated by the limited, officially sanctioned, popularly acclaimed worldview. Dead binds us; tells us that the world is closed shut and if there is an intrusion, an invasion not of our own devising, we don't get it.

To followers of Jesus are trudging along the seven miles of dusty road from Jerusalem to Emmaus when suddenly the risen Christ joins them incognito on their journey. The risen Christ is to them a stranger. By the time they reach the end of their journey, they have moved from disappointment and despair to hope and faith. That's the road each of us gets to walk.

The road to Emmaus is the way. That was the name of for the church, "**The Way**" it was called. The early church was not called the Christian church, it was called The Way. The early apostles were preaching The Way. The church, when it is half true to its promise, is a group of people on a road where, wonder of wonders, the risen Christ meets us.

If you want to experience the resurrection of Jesus Christ in your life, where you live, just get up in the morning and put one foot in front of the other and head down the road. Follow **The Way**. But please, go with a bit of imagination. Walk with the expectation of the possibility of surprise.

He comes to them as one unknown. He comes to them, "on the first day of the week," that is, the first day of Jewish work week, their Sunday, our Monday. He comes then, not while they are at worship, but while they are on the road. He comes to them not while they are studying the Bible, but on their way back from work, as the day is fading, at supper. Follow the way.