

## Reflection on the Scripture: Luke 24:13-35

[[The video of the reflection.](#)]

*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!"* (Luke 24:31-34)

Let's go there. On our daily walk, with the dog, without the dog, with our housemate, by ourselves, whatever. Let's go there. Let's go to "The Lord has risen indeed!" Let's go to that joy. Because it is so real and so important and so meaningful. Let's go to that joy. Because if we are going to walk seven miles out and seven miles back, let's walk to joy. And there are a lot of joys we can walk toward.

It's just that we have to start where we are, on this road to Emmaus. We have to join these two disciples somewhere true and honest. *But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel* (Luke 24:21). Yes, we had hoped. We had hoped that this journey would not have been so challenging. That the virus would be contained. That it would not be so contagious. That it would not be so lethal when caught. Yes, we had hoped.

Think of all the places we say "but we had hoped." We say it as we are gathering the things left in the ICU.<sup>1</sup> We say it as we learn of the second overdose. We say it when someone has wandered off without a coat during a winter storm because they don't remember about coats or about winter anymore.

So much of a life of faith is asserting that *he is risen*, even when it doesn't seem possible that anyone could have risen, because death, after all, is clearly the end. Sometimes we focus so much on *He is Risen* that we don't acknowledge how much faith it takes to say *but we had hoped*.

Now that our grocery stores are segregated again, not by race, but by medical vulnerability. Now that our neighbors are running a marathon not in downtown Boston but through the local roads with only friends to cheer them on from a safe distance. Now that we are actively asking people to die alone, without their family holding their hand. Now that that is our reality, perhaps the part of our

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Swanson, "Commentary on the Gospel: Luke 24:13-35" from "Lectionary Commentaries for May 4, 2014: Third Sunday of Easter", Working Preacher, [https://www.workingpreacher.org/wp\\_print\\_all.aspx?lectionary\\_calendar\\_id=473&print\\_type=comm&is\\_sp\\_anish=0](https://www.workingpreacher.org/wp_print_all.aspx?lectionary_calendar_id=473&print_type=comm&is_sp_anish=0) (accessed November 4, 2019).

faith we need to lean on is not the *He is Risen* part. Perhaps the part we need to lean on is the *but we had hoped* part.

Because Cleopas and his buddy were walking in faith. They were mulling over what had happened in Jerusalem. They were coming to terms with the reality that this was not what they had signed up for. This was not the world they had been trying to build. They had hoped for something completely different from what they had gotten.

And yet their faith led them to listen to a stranger telling the whole story of Scripture told from Moses on down, from Genesis and through the prophets to the story of the Messiah. They listened to the whole story told again, with new ideas lifted up, with new emphasis, that helped explain how even now, when what they had hoped for had not come to pass, God was with them. Because God was always with them.

Their faith led them to do one of the crazy things that Jesus was always doing. They ate with a stranger. Not because they believed that Jesus was risen. But because they had hoped so much for a different outcome, for something other than the Cross and persecution.

Those disciples on the road to Emmaus had so hoped that something else was going to happen. But if this rotten reality was what they had, then they were going to do what Jesus had taught them. They were going to share what they had. They were going to break a common loaf with each other. They were going to recognize the miracle of the loaves and the fishes by using the language that Jesus had used back then: took, blessed, broke, gave.<sup>2</sup>

If we want to get to *He is Risen*, sometimes we just have to start with *but we had hoped*. We have to start in the dust of the road, and we have to accept hospitality from a stranger. And then we have to offer hospitality to a stranger. Now maybe right now, we're not going to be sharing an actual pizza with anyone who isn't living under the same roof. But we can share a good laugh when someone makes [a dog video that's pretty funny](#). We can share [a beautiful piece of art](#) that someone made because the human spirit had so hoped for something different. We can cut our political leaders some slack *and* we can hold them accountable at the same time because Jesus did both and did it with love.

Sure, I want to go *He is Risen*. It's just that I need to accept where I'm starting from. And, for today, that is just *but we had hoped*. Because there is faith all along that journey, from beginning to end.

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<sup>2</sup> John Dominic Crossan, *The Greatest Prayer: Rediscovering the Revolutionary Message of the Lord's Prayer*. (New York: HarperCollins, 2010): 134.

